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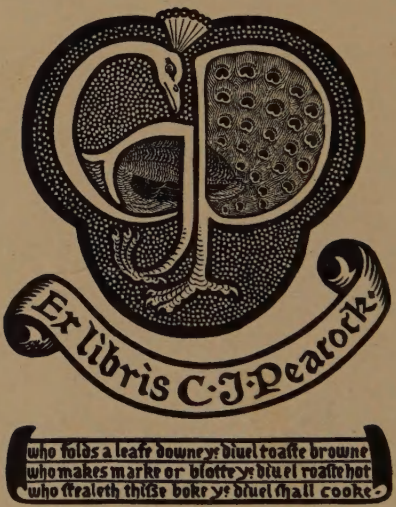
THE WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE REFORMATION

BY
WALTER WALSH
AUTHOR OF
"THE SECRET HISTORY
OF THE
OXFORD MOVEMENT"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THE WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE REFORMATION

By WALTER WALSH, F. R. Hist. S.
AUTHOR OF 'THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT,' etc., etc.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

London
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
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PREFACE

IT is a remarkable fact that, so far as I can ascertain, no one has hitherto ever written a book exclusively on the Women Martyrs of the Reformation. It is true that the late Rev. James Anderson wrote two valuable volumes on *The Ladies of the Reformation*, but very few Protestant Martyrs were included in his work. Any one desiring to obtain anything like an adequate knowledge of what women of all ranks suffered for Protestantism, could only obtain it by reading through a very large number of books, some of them very scarce, and not easily obtainable.

For the past ten years I have tried in vain to induce some lady to write this book. It would have been better if I could have succeeded; but as no one has come forward I have at last taken it in hand myself, and done my humble best. I have made a beginning only. Others, I trust, will come after me and complete the work I have here commenced. The memory of the just

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is blessed, and ought not to be forgotten. Men have suffered much for Reformation principles; but I venture to submit that the following pages prove that women have not been one whit behind their brethren in what they have endured for the love of Jesus and His sacred truth. It will be observed that almost every rank in life has contributed to the noble army of Women Martyrs.

W. W.

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THE WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE REFORMATION

CHAPTER I

WOMEN MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

Anne Askew

AMONGST the women Martyrs of the Reformation, not one deserves to be held in higher honour than Anne Askew. Very little, however, is recorded about her early life. It is known that she was of gentle birth. Her father was Sir William Askew, of Kelsey, Lincolnshire, where she was born about the year 1521, being the second daughter of a family of five children, of whom two were sons. The eldest daughter was engaged to be married to a wealthy gentleman in the same county, a Mr. Thomas Kyme, but she died before the wedding took place; whereupon her father, apparently without giving her

any option in the matter, ordered Anne to take her sister's place, and marry Mr. Kyme, though it was very much against her will.

This gentleman was a bigoted Papist, and when he found that his young wife had become a diligent student of the Bible, and a true lover of her Saviour, his anger was aroused. At this time Anne had become the mother of two little children, and was about twenty-four years of age. She loved the written Word of God exceedingly, so much so that later on she boldly declared to one of her persecutors: 'I had rather read five lines in the Bible, than to hear five masses in the Temple.' But the time at length came when she must either give up her Bible, and the Protestant religion which through it she had learned to love, or else her husband and much-loved children. It was a hard trial for a young mother, but Anne Askew did not hesitate in her choice. Jesus with all His love and grace was on one side, while husband, children, wealth, comfort, and worldly pleasure were on the other; and she chose Jesus. In a fury her husband drove her from her home, to which, so far as we are aware, she never returned.

On her way from her home to London, Anne stayed nine days in Lincoln, where she spent a portion of her time in the cathedral, reading the Bible. There she seems to have been an object

of curiosity to the priests, who came, two or three at a time, to where she was, no doubt to discover, if possible, what kind of a book it was that she studied; yet not one of them seems to have had courage enough to speak a word to her, except one whose remarks were of no importance. From Lincoln she went on to London, with the object of obtaining a divorce from her husband, because of his ill-treatment. In this, however, she failed. In London she lodged in a house near the Temple. An official of the Chancery, named Wadloe, who was very zealous in his defence of Popery against Protestantism, hearing that Anne Askew was in this house, and having evidently learnt something about her recent history, took a lodging for himself next door, for the purpose of spying upon her movements. The result was not such as he had anticipated, for he who came to curse went away to bless. He reported to Sir Lionel Throgmorton that she was the devoutest and godliest woman he had ever met with, 'for,' he said, 'at midnight she beginneth to pray, and ceaseth not in many hours after.'

Anne had the courage of her convictions, and while lodging near the Temple she was overheard by some one speaking against the doctrine of transubstantiation. This led to her arrest. On March 12, 1545, she was brought before Christopher

Dare, at Sadlers' Hall. Our knowledge of what took place on this occasion, and at her subsequent examinations, is confined to her own reports of the proceedings, the truth of which there is no reason to doubt. Dare asked her many questions, but soon found out that Anne was more than a match for him. He told her that some woman had testified that she (Anne) had said that God was not in temples made with hands; whereupon he asked her to explain certain portions of the Acts of the Apostles.

'He asked me,' she says, 'how I took those sentences? I answered, I would not throw pearls before swine, for acorns were good enough.' He then charged her with having said that 'If an ill priest ministered, it was the devil and not God'; but she denied that she had ever said such a thing. After this she was asked, what she thought about confession. 'I answered him,' she says, 'my meaning, which was, as St. James saith, that every man ought to acknowledge his faults to other, and the one to pray for the other.' 'Seventhly, he asked me if I had the Spirit of God in me? I answered, if I had not, I was but a reprobate or castaway.' Dare soon got tired of examining his prisoner, and called in a priest to help him. But the priest fared no better than Dare; some of his questions she answered, but others she refused

to reply to, 'because,' she explains, 'I perceived him to be a Papist.'

'Then,' she continues, 'they had me hence before the Lord Mayor, and he examined me, and I answered him directly in all things, as I answered the quest before. Besides this, my Lord Mayor laid one thing to my charge, which was never spoken of me, but of them; and that was, whether a mouse, eating the Host, received God, or no? This question did I never ask, but indeed they asked it of me, whereunto I made them no answer, but smiled.'

And well she might smile at the folly which prompted the Lord Mayor to ask a question which placed the dogma of transubstantiation in so absurd a light. Here is a portion of her examination, as reported by Strype:

Lord Mayor.—'Thou foolish woman, sayest thou, that the priests cannot make the body of Christ?'

Askew.—'I say so, my Lord; for I have read that God made man; but that man can make God, I never yet read, nor, I suppose, ever shall read.'

Lord Mayor.—'No, thou foolish woman. After the words of consecration, is it not the Lord's body?'

Askew.—'No; it is but consecrated bread, or sacramental bread.'

Lord Mayor.—'What if a mouse eat it after the consecration? What shall become of the mouse? What sayest thou, foolish woman?'

Askew.—'What shall become of her, say you, my Lord?'

Lord Mayor.—'I say that that mouse is damned.'

Askew.—'Alack, poor mouse!'

On which many in the Court began laughing at the Lord Mayor.

The Bishop of London's Chancellor took part in the examination, and made a remarkable exhibition of his ignorance of the New Testament when he said, that St. Paul 'forbade women to speak or talk of the Word of God.' The only result of this examination was that the Lord Mayor ordered Anne to be taken to prison. She asked if she could not be admitted to bail, provided suitable sureties were forthcoming. To which his answer was that he would take no sureties whatever. She was then taken to a prison known as the Compter, where she was kept for eleven days. During this period no friend was allowed to speak with her. But a priest was sent to the prison to examine her. He professed great sympathy with Anne in her trouble, and said it was a great pity she should be there without a cause, and that he was very sorry for her. But he asked her several questions notwithstanding.

He wanted to know 'If the Host should fall, and a beast did eat it, whether the beast did eat God or not?' Which was substantially the same question as had previously been put to her by the Lord Mayor. She told him to answer the question himself, for she would not do it, 'because I perceive you come to tempt me.'

At the close of her eleven days in prison, on March 23, her cousin, Mr. Brittayne, very courageously went to the Compter to see her, with the object of securing her release on bail. From the prison he went direct to the Lord Mayor, who referred him to the Chancellor of the Diocese, adding that he could not release Anne Askew out on bail without the Chancellor's consent. To him at once Mr. Brittayne went, who said that the matter was of so heinous a character that he dare not give his consent to bail, without the sanction of the Bishop of London (Bonner).

He therefore requested Brittayne to come back again the next day for the Bishop's decision. When Brittayne arrived he found the Bishop with his Chancellor. Bonner said he was favourable to the application, but requested him to call again the next day at three o'clock in the afternoon. But, two hours before the appointed time, Bonner had Anne herself brought before him. Then he told her that he was sorry for her trouble, but that he wished to know her

opinions on certain charges which had been brought against her. She replied that, as he had appointed three o'clock for the purpose, and her friends would not arrive before then, she begged that he would defer the examination until they came. He granted this request and went away for a walk in his gallery.

But the Bishop did not leave Anne alone, for he sent his Archdeacon to pester her with more questions. The Archdeacon found her reading a book written, as he thought, by John Frith, the martyr. He at once took it out of her hand. 'Such books as this,' he said to her, 'have brought you to the trouble you are in. Beware, for he that made this book, and was the author thereof, was a heretic, I warrant you, and burned in Smithfield.' 'Then,' Anne asked him, 'if he were not ashamed to judge of the book before he saw it within.' She then opened the volume, and showed it to him. It was not the work he suspected.

At three o'clock her faithful cousin came in, with several other friends. Then the Bishop began his examination. He first of all urged Anne fully to unburden her mind; to which she replied that she had nothing to say, for her conscience was burdened with nothing. He then asked her what her faith and belief were as to the sacrament, to which this noble heroine

boldly replied : ' I believe as the Scripture doth teach me,' for with her, as it should be with every Christian, the Bible was her only Rule of Faith. The following are extracts from her examination on this occasion :

Bonner.—' What if the Scripture doth say, that it is the body of Christ ? '

Askew.—' I believe as the Scripture informeth me.'

Bonner.—' Why have you so few words ? '

Askew.—' God hath given me the gift of knowledge, but not of utterance ; and Solomon saith that a woman of few words is the gift of God.' (Prov. xix. 14.)

Bonner.—' Did you not say that the mass was superstitious, wicked, and no better than idolatry ? '

Askew.—' No ; I said not so. Howbeit I say that the quest [Dare] did ask me whether private mass did relieve souls departed or no ? Unto whom then I answered, O Lord ! what idolatry is this, that we should rather believe in private masses, than in the healthsome death of the dear Son of God ! '

Bonner.—' What an answer is that ! '

Askew.—' Though it be but mean, yet it is good enough for the question.'

Bonner.—There are many who read and know the Scripture, and yet follow it not, nor live thereafter.'

Askew.—'My Lord, I would wish that all men knew my conversation and living in all points; for I am sure myself this hour, that here are none able to prove any dishonesty by me. If you know that any can do it, I pray you bring them forth.'

Of course, neither Bonner nor any of her Popish enemies were able to bring forth a single charge against her character. At this point Bonner left the room for a time, but soon after came back with a written confession of faith for her to sign. In this she was to profess her belief in the real presence, and in all the sacraments of the Church of Rome. He read the document to her, but refused to give her a copy.

Anne had only to sign this document, and then life and liberty would be hers. She was asked if she agreed to what had been read to her. To this her cautious reply was: 'I believe as much thereof as the Holy Scripture doth agree unto; wherefore I desire you that ye will add that thereunto.' Every effort was made by Bonner and the other Romanists present to induce her to sign this confession of faith. At last Bonner placed the document before her, when, instead of doing what he wished, she wrote instead: 'I, Anne Askew, do believe all manner of things contained in the faith of the Catholic Church.'

'Then,' Anne tells us, 'because I did add unto it "the Catholic Church," he flung into his chamber in a great fury. With that my cousin Brittayne followed, desiring him, for God's sake, to be good lord unto me. He answered that I was a woman, and that he was nothing deceived in me. Then my cousin Brittayne desired him to take me as a woman, and not to set my weak woman's wit to his lordship's great wisdom. . . . So, with much ado, they persuaded my lord to-come out again, and to take my name, with the names of my sureties, which were my cousin Brittayne, and Master Spilman, of Gray's Inn.'

Though we are not expressly told that these two last-named gentlemen were Roman Catholics, yet I have no doubt that it was so; for we may be quite sure that no one even suspected of Protestantism would have been accepted by Bonner as sureties for Anne Askew. They, therefore, deserve all the more honour for the part they took in this transaction, for by it they risked being marked men.

And so, at last, Anne Askew was released from prison. But it was not for long. Within three months she was arrested again. What she had said or done during this interval of liberty we do not know; but in all probability she had been talking to people about her Divine Master and His Gospel, and refuting the errors of the Church

of Rome. This time her appearance was at Greenwich, before the King's Council. Amongst her judges were Lord Chancellor Wriothesley ; Gardiner, the cruel Bishop of Winchester ; Tunstall, Bishop of Durham ; Rich, Solicitor-General, with eight others. It was, indeed, a formidable body before whom this young lady had to appear. But she was without fear, realising that God and His truth were on her side. Her examination, on this occasion, lasted for five weary hours. The Lord Chancellor asked her for her opinion as to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. She answered :

' I believe that so oft as I, in a Christian congregation, do receive the bread in remembrance of Christ's death, and with thanksgiving, according to His holy institution, I receive therewith the fruits, also, of His most glorious Passion.'

The Bishop of Winchester was not at all pleased with this answer, and told her to give a direct answer to the question. Her simple reply was : ' How can I sing a new song of the Lord in a strange land ? ' The Bishop thereupon called her a ' parrot.' Again and again the Council scolded her severely ; but she would not give way an inch. So, after five hours' examination, Anne was sent away until the next day. On this occasion Gardiner offered to converse with her ' familiarly ' ; but this, at once, she firmly

refused. 'So did Judas,' she answered the Bishop, 'when he unfriendly betrayed Christ.' 'Then,' says Anne, in her account of the proceedings, 'he desired to speak with me alone. But that I refused. He asked me why? I said that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter should stand, after Christ's and Paul's docrine.' 'Then the Bishop said I should be burned. I answered that I had searched all the Scriptures, yet could I never find that either Christ, or His Apostles, put any creature to death. "Well, well," said I, "God will laugh your threatenings to scorn."' Anne concludes her account of this examination by telling her friend:

'Then they made me a bill of the sacrament, willing me to put my hand to it; but I would not. Then, on the Sunday, I was sore sick, thinking no less than to die; therefore I desired to speak with Master Latimer, but it would not be. Then I was sent to Newgate in my extremity of sickness; for in all my life afore I never was in such pain. Thus the Lord strengthen you in the truth. Pray, pray, pray!'

While lying a prisoner in Newgate prison, Anne wrote a short confession of her faith, as to the Lord's Supper. 'The bread,' she wrote, 'is but a remembrance of His death, or a sacrament of thanksgiving for it'; and she concluded

her confession thus: 'Written by me, Anne Askew, that neither wish death, nor yet fear his might; and as merry as one that is bound towards heaven.'

On the next morning Anne was taken from Newgate to the Guildhall, and there (in company with two other faithful witnesses, Christopher White and a tailor named Adams) she received sentence of death from the Lord Chancellor, in the presence of the King's Council. Yet even here she was questioned again about the sacrament, to which she bravely replied: 'And as for that ye call God, it is a piece of bread. For a more proof thereof (mark it when you list), let it but lie in the box three months, and it will be mouldy, and so turn to nothing that is good. Whereupon I am persuaded that it cannot be God.' Truly, in the case of Anne Askew, the Saviour's promise to His persecuted followers was strikingly fulfilled: 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist' (Luke xxi. 15).

Anne was taken back again to Newgate prison. At that time there was also lying under sentence of death for Protestantism a gentleman of the Royal Court, named John Lacells. He wrote a letter, while in prison, to Anne Askew, telling her that he had heard she was afraid to die, and exhorting her not to yield. The tone of this

letter seems to have grieved her very much, and led her to write to him as follows :

'O friend, most dearly beloved in God! I marvel not a little what should move you to judge in me so slender a faith as to fear death, which is the end of all misery. In the Lord I desire you not to believe of me such wickedness ; for I doubt it not, but God will perform His work in me, like as He hath begun. I understand now that the Council is not a little displeased, that it should be reported abroad that I was racked in the Tower. They say now, that what they did there was but to fear me ; whereby I perceive they are ashamed of their uncomely doings, and fear much lest the King's Majesty should have information thereof ; wherefore they would no man to noise it. Well! their cruelty God forgive them.

'Your heart in Christ Jesu. Farewell and pray.'

The racking to which reference is made in this letter took place *after* Anne's condemnation. We still have her own pathetic report of her sufferings. Before she was tortured, she was taken to a house known as the 'Sign of the Crown,' where she met Rich and Bishop Bonner, who tried their best to induce her to recant, but in vain. 'With all their power and flattering words,' she wrote, 'they went about to persuade me from

God; but I did not esteem their glosing pretences.' She stood firm. Then they brought to her Bishop Nicholas Shaxton, who had himself been in prison for denying transubstantiation, and condemned to be burnt. But the fear of death frightened him; he recanted, and lived to become himself a bitter persecutor of the faith. We may be quite sure that Shaxton was about the last man in the world to influence Anne. He had only that very day signed his recantation, and he advised her to do as he had done. 'I said to him,' she wrote, 'that it had been good for him never to have been born.'

All efforts to induce her to deny the truth of God having failed, she was next taken to the Tower of London. There she waited until three o'clock, when Rich and Sir John Baker arrived, and asked her to reveal the names of those she knew who held Protestant opinions; but she refused to reveal anything. Next they wanted to know how she was supported when in the Compter prison, no doubt with a view to the arrest of her helpers, if anything could be proved against them. She told them that her maid servant went out into the streets and begged from the apprentices, who gave her money, but who the donors were she never knew. They asked her if several ladies also had not sent her money. 'I answered that there was a man in

a blue coat who delivered me ten shillings, and said that my Lady of Hertford sent it me; and another in a violet coat gave me eight shillings, and said my Lady Denny sent it; whether it were true or no, I cannot tell; for I am not sure who sent it me, but as the maid did say. Then they said, there were of the Council that did maintain me; and I said, No.'

'Then they did put me on the rack, because I confessed no ladies or gentlemen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long time; and because *I lay still, and did not cry*, my Lord Chancellor and Master Rich took pains to rack me with their own hands, till I was nigh dead.

'Then the lieutenant caused me to be loosed from the rack. Incontinently I swooned, and then they recovered me again. After that I sat two long hours reasoning with my Lord Chancellor upon the bare floor; where he, with many flattering words, persuaded me to leave my opinion. But my Lord God (I thank His everlasting goodness!) gave me grace to persevere, and will do, I hope, to the very end.

'Then was I brought to a house, and laid in a bed, with as weary and painful bones as ever had patient Job; I thank my God therefor. Then my Lord Chancellor sent me word, if I would leave my opinion, I should want for nothing; if I would not, I should forthwith to

Newgate, and so be burned. I sent him again word, that I would rather die than break my faith.

'Thus the Lord open the eyes of their blind hearts, that the truth may take place. Farewell, dear friend, and pray, pray, pray!'

The statement that the Lord Chancellor himself took part in torturing Anne Askew has been denied by Roman Catholic writers, and even Burnet throws doubt upon it, though he does not deny it altogether. But Anne is not likely to have been mistaken as to his identity. She had met the Lord Chancellor when before the Council, and on this occasion had spent two hours in his presence. It is said that he was himself of an amiable disposition; that may have been the case, yet we cannot forget that with her devotees the interests of the Church of Rome come before all other considerations, and men have been known in her interests to do cruel deeds from which they would have shrunk with horror in the every-day affairs of life. I see no reason to doubt the truth of Anne's own narrative. Foxe says that, 'quietly and patiently praying unto the Lord, she abode their tyranny, till her bones and joints were almost plucked asunder, in such sort that she was carried away in a chair.' And yet, while in that condition, they brutally kept her for two hours sitting on the floor, torturing

Ann Askew before the Lord Chancellor.

her further with questions! Truly God's strength was manifest in her weakness. Well might Bishop Bale, who lived in those dangerous times, addressing the torturers of brave Anne Askew, write: 'And as concerning the innocent woman whom you so cruelly tormented, where could be seen a more clear and open experiment of Christ's dear member, than in her mighty sufferings? Like a lamb she lay still without noise of crying, and suffered your utmost violence, till the sinews of her arms were broken, and the strings of her eyes perished in her head. Right far doth it pass the strength of a young, tender, weak, and sick woman (as she was at that time, to your more confusion), to abide so violent handling, yea, or yet the strongest man that liveth. Think not, therefore, but that Christ hath suffered in her, and so mightily showed His power, that in her weakness He hath laughed your mad enterprises to scorn. Psalm ii.'

During the interval between her torture and death, Anne gave herself very much to prayer. Here is one of her prayers, written within view of death:

'O Lord! I have more enemies now, than there be hairs on my head; yet, Lord, let them never overcome me with vain words, but fight Thou, Lord, in my stead; for on Thee I cast my care. With all the spite they can imagine, they

fall upon me, who am Thy poor creature. Yet, sweet Lord, let me not set by them that are against me; for in Thee is my delight. And, Lord, I heartily desire of Thee, that Thou wilt of Thy merciful goodness forgive them that violence which they do, and have done unto me. Open Thou also their blind hearts, that they may hereafter do that thing in Thy sight which is only acceptable before Thee, and so set forth Thy verity aright, without all vain fantasies of sinful men. So be it, O Lord, so be it!

'By me, Anne Askew.'

At last the day came on which Anne Askew had to pass through a martyr's painful death to a martyr's eternal crown. John Loude, or Louthe, Archdeacon of Nottingham, who was present on that occasion, and afterwards wrote an account of the memorable scene, says that 'she had an angel's face, and a smiling countenance.' She was too weak to walk, owing to the cruel rackings she had undergone, and therefore had to be carried to the place of execution on a chair. The Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Russell, and the Lord Mayor were there to see her die, and to die with her, three other noble Protestant martyrs, Mr. Lacells (already named), John Adams, and a priest named Belenian, of Otterden. There was an enormous crowd of spectators in Smithfield, to witness the

sad scene. The apostate Shaxton was selected to preach the funeral sermon. The unhappy man was not allowed to preach without interruption. Anne Askew, brave to the last, praised him aloud when he said something good ; but when he went wrong she corrected him, saying : ' There he misseth, and speaketh without the book.' When the sermon was ended, the Lord Chancellor sent to Anne a written offer of the King's pardon if she would recant, and a similar offer to the other martyrs. But they all refused to give up their Saviour and His Gospel. Then the Lord Mayor of London commanded fire to be put to them, and ere long they passed away from earth, to be for ever with the Lord.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

(*Continued*)

Agnes Grebil—Margaret Polley—Isabel Foster—Joan Lashford—Elizabeth Warne—Anne Albright—Joan Catmer—Agnes Snoth—Joan Sole—Alice Potkins—Joan Bradbridge—Petronil Appleby—The Wife of Manning—Katherine Allin—Elizabeth—— —A Blind Girl, a Blind Man, and a Blind Boy.

AS there were Protestants before the Reformation, so were there Protestant martyrs also. The ancient Waldenses, the followers of Wycliffe and the Lollards in England, and of John Huss on the Continent, all afforded victims for Papal fires lit before the Reformation. Rome's persecutions did not commence in the sixteenth century. It is true that many of these pre-Reformation heroes, who died protesting against Popish errors, may have varied slightly in their faith ; but they all believed in the right of private judgment, and accepted the Bible as their only Rule of Faith. In this noble army of martyrs many women were found, whose very names have been forgotten by the world.

In England a very sad instance of martyrdom took place in the year 1511. At that time there lived in Tenterden, Kent, a family named Grebil, consisting of father and mother, and two sons, one aged twenty-two, the other aged nineteen. Their names were John Grebil (the father), Agnes Grebil (the mother), and Christopher and John Grebil, sons. Both father and mother held Protestant doctrines, and were strongly opposed to the errors of the Church of Rome. They carefully educated their children in the same faith, and there can be no doubt that they were all alike conscientious and sincere in the religion they professed. They were all arrested together as heretics, together with four others. Unfortunately, through fear of death, the father and sons turned cowards, and even sank so low as to come forward as witnesses against the wife and mother. It is not to be wondered at that when she heard of their cowardice and unnatural conduct, in the bitterness of her soul she exclaimed: 'I repent the time when I bare such children!' Commenting on this conduct, Foxe justly remarks: 'Now, besides all this, the husband to come in against his own wife, and the children to bring the knife wherewith to cut the throat of their own mother that bare them, that nourished them, that brought them up, what is this but impiety upon impiety, prodigious

and horrible for all Christian ears to hear? And yet the greatest impiety of all resteth in those pretended Catholics and clergymen who were the authors and causes of all this mischief.'

Twelve articles, or charges, were brought against Agnes Grebil and the others arrested with her, who were all tried by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Warham). They were as follows:

1. 'For holding that the sacrament of the altar was not the true and very body of Christ, but only material bread in substance.

2. 'That auricular confession was not to be made to a priest.

3. 'That no power is given of God to priests of ministering sacraments, saying mass, or other Divine Service, more than to laymen.

4. 'That the solemnisation of matrimony is not necessary to the salvation of the soul, neither was instituted of God.[1]

5. 'That the sacrament of extreme unction is not available nor necessary to the soul's health.

6. 'That the images of the cross, of the crucifix, of the Blessed Virgin, and other saints, are not to be worshipped; and that those who worship them do commit idolatry.

7. 'That pilgrimages to holy places, and holy

[1] They meant, not necessary as a sacrament, as in the Church of Rome.

relics, be not necessary nor meritorious to the soul's health.

8. 'That invocation is not to be made to the saints, but only to God, and that He only heareth their prayers.

9. 'That holy bread and holy water have no more virtue after their consecration than before.

10. 'That they have believed, taught, and holden all and every of the same damnable opinions before, as they did at the present.

11. 'That whereas they have now confessed their errors,[1] they would not have so done but only for fear of manifest proofs brought against them; or else, but for fear to be convicted by them, they would never have confessed the same of their own accord.

12. 'That they have communed and talked of the said damnable errors heretofore with divers other persons, and have had books concerning the same.'

It will be observed that these alleged errors were all held some few years later on by all the Protestants; but when Agnes Grebil had to answer for them, Luther had not yet begun his life work. At her trial she pleaded not guilty,

[1] That is, they acknowledged that they believed the things charged against them; not that they confessed them to be errors.

with a view to throwing the burden of proof on the prosecution. She seems to have thought that sufficient evidence could not be produced for a conviction; but when she saw her husband and two sons come forward as witnesses against her, hope must have fled. Her husband testified as follows:

'That first, about the end of King Edward the Fourth's reign, in his house, by the teaching of John Ive, she [Agnes Grebil] was brought to that belief; and so forth from thence daily, until the time of detection, she hath continued.

'And besides that,' he continued, 'when my children Christopher and John, being about seven years of age, were then taught by me in my house the said error of the sacrament of the altar, and by the said Agnes my wife divers times, she was always of one mind in the said misbelief against the sacrament of the altar, that it was not Christ's body, flesh, and blood, but only bread. She always without contradiction affirmed this teaching, and said that the said opinion was good, and was well contented that her children aforesaid were of the same opinion against the sacrament of the altar.'

And this is what the two sons testified against their mother:

'That the aforesaid Agnes, their mother, held, believed, taught, and defended, that the sacra-

ment of the altar was but bread, and not the very body of Christ's flesh and blood; that baptism was no better in the font than out of the font; that confirmation was of no effect; that the solemnisation of matrimony was no sacrament; that confession to God alone was sufficient; also that going on pilgrimage and worshipping of saints and images was of none effect.

'That their father and the said Agnes, their mother, held, taught, and communed of the said errors within their house divers times, by the space of those three years past, as well on holy days as on working days, affirming and teaching that the said opinions were good and lawful, and to be holden and maintained; and agreement was made among them, that none of them should discover or betray either of these beliefs in any wise.

'Finally, that they never heard their father and mother holding or teaching any other opinions than be the said error against the sacrament, and pilgrimages, offerings, worshipping of saints and images, as far as they could remember.'

For these alleged offences, and on this evidence most unnaturally given against her, Agnes Grebil was found guilty, and, without even hope of pardon should she retract, was burnt to death on May 2, 1511.

So far as I can ascertain, the first woman burnt alive for Protestantism in England, during the reign of Queen Mary, was Margaret Polley. It is unknown what her station of life was; yet in all probability, like so many others of her sex who died at that time, she was of the humbler ranks of life. She was arrested and brought before Maurice Griffith, Bishop of Rochester, early in the month of June, 1555. Five charges were formulated against her, and she was required by the Bishop to answer them on her oath. The third and fourth were the principal points in her indictment. She was charged with having held and maintained that 'in the sacrament of the altar, under the forms of bread and wine, is not the very body and blood of Christ, and that the said very body of Christ is verily in heaven only, and not in the sacrament.' And further, she was accused of having maintained that 'the mass, as it is now used in the Catholic Church, is naught and abominable.' She told the Bishop that she refused to acknowledge the deity of the sacrament, and that she repudiated the absurdity of the mass. These were the only offences which were charged against her; but, in the opinion of the Bishop, any woman who held them was not worthy to live in this world, and stood no chance of entering heaven in the next world. So true-hearted Margaret Polley

was condemned by him to be burnt alive at Dartford, in Kent. There was a great crowd in Dartford on the day appointed for her death, in the month of July, people coming in from all the surrounding villages.

Another martyr was appointed to die with her. His name was Christopher Wade, a linen-weaver by trade, whose home had been in Dartford. It was about ten o'clock in the morning when the execution took place, and as Margaret looked round at the great crowds assembled, instead of being sad or frightened she showed a most cheerful countenance, and said aloud to her brother martyr: 'You may rejoice, Wade, to see such a company gathered to celebrate your marriage this day.' And this is the last we have to record of brave Margaret Polley, except to add that a Martyrs' Memorial Hall has, in recent years, been erected at Dartford in her memory and that of the other Protestant martyrs who were burnt in that town.

Early in the month of January, 1556, seven godly Protestants, five men and two women, were all tried together on one day, on the same charges against each, and on the 27th of the same month they were all burnt together at Smithfield in one fire. Of these two women, one was married, and the other was single. The first of these, Isabel Foster, was born at Greystocke, in the

diocese of Carlisle, and married John Foster, a cutler residing in Fleet Street, London. At the time of her arrest she was fifty-five years of age. She had refused to go to church for some time previously, and this led to her persecution. She, with the others, was charged, not only that they refused to believe in the real presence in the sacramental bread and wine, or in the sacrifice of the mass, but also that she had been guilty of 'railing and maligning the authority of the See of Rome, and the faith observed and kept in the same, and hast not been penitent and sorry for thine offences therein.'

Isabel told Bishop Bonner, who tried them all, that she had continued in the Popish faith from her birth, until the reign of Edward VI., and then when she heard the Gospel truly and faithfully preached, she had embraced it, and had kept it ever since. She frankly admitted that she had spoken against the faith of the Church of Rome, and she believed that the Church of England, as a part of that Church, 'was no part of the true Catholic Church.' She added that since Queen Mary had begun her reign she had not heard mass, nor received the sacrament, and had refused to go to places where the mass was celebrated. Bishop Bonner first of all tried to bribe her into apostasy, promising her life and liberty if she would only give up her faith and

join the Church of Rome. Finding this line to fail, he had resort to the usual tactics of bullies; he began to threaten her. Her only reply was that 'by God's grace' she would never give way.

The other female martyr who suffered with Isabel Foster was Joan Lashford. She was very young, being only twenty years old when arrested. She was one of a martyred family. Her stepfather, John Warne, was burnt alive at Smithfield, for professing the Protestant religion, on May 30, 1555. His wife, Elizabeth Warne, her mother, two months later, was burnt alive at Stratford-le-Bow; and now her daughter by a former husband, Joan Lashford, was brought to the stake. John Warne had been in trouble for his religious opinions in the days of Henry VIII., having been arrested on the Thursday after Anne Askew was martyred at Smithfield. He had been thrown into Newgate prison, but managed to escape. Being arrested again in 1555, he boldly said to Bishop Bonner, that bitter persecutor of the saints of God: 'I am persuaded that I am in the right opinion, and I see no cause to repent, for all filthiness and idolatry is in the Church of Rome.' His widow, Elizabeth Warne, was by no means intimidated by her husband's fate, for only the month after his martyrdom she was apprehended while attending a prayer-meeting in a private house

in Bow Churchyard, and taken to the Compter prison. The usual charges were brought against her when she appeared before Bonner. She would not, it was affirmed, go to church ; she had spoken against the mass, and had despised its ceremonies. In reply to Bonner's exhortation to recant, this pious Christian's reply was : ' Do what ye will ; for if Christ were in an error, then am I in an error.' There was no mercy for a heroic Christian like her, and so in due course courageous Elizabeth Warne passed through the fire to the martyr's crown.

And now, as already stated, the third member of a godly family, young Joan Lashford, was brought forth to suffer death for Jesus in the January following her mother's and father-in-law's death. Like a good daughter, she had ministered to both of them while they were in prison, trying to lessen their sufferings so far as lay in her power. These acts of dutiful affection were the cause of her being herself suspected of sympathising with her parents' religious views. How could she be faithful to the Church of Rome, when she showed kindness to a couple of heretics, as Rome considered them ?

In due course she also was sent to the Compter prison, where she was kept for five weeks. Then she was removed to Newgate, and detained there for some months. When at length brought to

trial before Bonner, young Joan told him that she had never swerved or gone away from any part of Christ's Catholic faith and religion; but she admitted that since the time she was eleven years of age she had disliked the sacrifice of the mass, and the authority of the See of Rome, with all its peculiar doctrines, and that because they were against Christ's Catholic Church and faith. She further told him that she would not go to mass, nor confess her sins to an earthly priest, for neither auricular confession nor Popish priestly absolution were necessary for her soul's health. In her opinion all these things, as well as the ceremonies and Divine service, as then used in the Church of England, 'were most vile, and contrary to Christ's words and institution.'

'This godly damsel,' writes Foxe, 'feeble and tender of age, yet strong by grace, in this her confession and faith stood so firm, that neither the flattering promises nor the violent threats of the Bishop could turn her.' When asked to return to the Church of Rome, her faithful reply was: 'If ye will leave off your abominations, I will return; but, otherwise, I will not.' 'Do as it please you,' she said, 'and I pray God that you may do that which may please God.' She was sentenced to death, and so, with Isabel Foster, and five other noble martyrs, was burnt in one fire in Smithfield, on January 27, 1556.

Only four days after the event just recorded, another great bonfire of Protestants was lit in the ancient city of Canterbury. On January 31, 1556, no fewer than four women and one man were burnt alive. The man's name was John Lomas; the women were Anne Albright, Joan Catmer, Agnes Snoth, and Joan Sole. Anne Albright, who had all the courage of her Christian convictions, when brought before her judges refused to confess her sins to a priest, and told the priests around her in court some wholesome truths.

Joan Catmer was the widow of George Catmer, who, on the 6th of the previous September, had been burnt in the same city of Canterbury, by sentence of the Bishop of Dover, for denying transubstantiation, the mass, and auricular confession. 'Christ,' he said, 'sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, and therefore I do not believe Him to be in the sacrament of the altar; but He is in the worthy receiver spiritually; and the sacrament, as you use it, is an abominable idol.' His widow said substantially the same thing to her judges the following January.

Agnes Snoth also denounced the real presence, the mass, and auricular confession, and for these offences was condemned to a fiery death; and so also did Joan Sole. Foxe says of Joan that

' the assistance of God's grace and Spirit mightily worked in her, to the glory of His name, and confirmation of His truth ' ; and that the whole of the seven martyrs put to death together that day, suffered, ' ratifying and confessing with their blood the true knowledge and doctrine of the glorious Gospel of Christ Jesus our Saviour.' They all sang Psalms together until death put an end to their sufferings.

Foxe mentions four men, and one woman, Alice Potkins, of Staplehurst, who were starved to death in Canterbury Castle. Of these, two had not been condemned, but the other three had been sentenced to death by fire, amongst them being Alice Potkins. She was condemned because she refused to confess to a priest, would not invoke saints, nor creep to the cross, and because she had not received the sacrament at the hands of Romish priests. She told her judges that ' she was forty-nine years old, according to her old age ; and according to her young age, since she learned Christ, she was of one year's age.' It was, therefore, very soon after her conversion that she was called upon to suffer for Christ. Though sentenced to death she did not, as we have stated, die at the stake, but was starved to death in prison, and is therefore justly entitled to rank amongst the women martyrs of the Reformation. Some idea of the sufferings

which she and her fellow-prisoners endured at the hands of their jailers, may be gathered from a statement which they contrived to send out of their prison. It was as follows :

'Be it known to all men that shall read, or hear read these our letters, that we the poor prisoners of the Castle of Canterbury for God's truth, are kept and lie in cold irons, and our keeper will not suffer any meat to be brought to us to comfort us. And if any man do bring us anything, as bread, butter, cheese, or any other food, the said keeper will charge them that so bring us anything (except money or raiment), to carry it back with them again. Or else, if he do receive any food for any of us, he doth keep it for himself, and he and his servants do spend it, so that we have nothing thereof. And thus the keeper keepeth away our victuals from us; insomuch that there are four of us prisoners there for God's truth famished already, and thus is it his mind to famish us all.

'And we think he is appointed thereunto by the bishops and priests, and also of the justices, so to punish us; and not only us of the said castle, but also all other prisoners in other prisons for the like cause, to be also famished. Notwithstanding we write not these letters to that intent we might not be afford to be famished for the Lord Jesus' sake, but for this cause and

intent, that they, having no law so to famish us in prison, should not do it privily, but that the murderers' hearts should be openly known to all the world, that all men may know of what Church they are, and who is their father.

'Out of the Castle of Canterbury.'

There were other women martyrs put to death in England during the year 1556, though in most instances very little is known about those who suffered.

And here it may be well to note that many women suffered bitter persecution during Queen Mary's reign who were not actually put to death. It was dangerous for a woman to be heard speaking a word offensive to priestly ears in those days. For instance, a woman happened to go into St. Magnus' Church, near London Bridge, one day, and seeing certain preparations for what looked like a funeral service, asked some one standing by what it meant. She was told they were about to pray for the Pope, who had recently died, and was then asked to join in the service. She answered, somewhat satirically: 'Nay, that I will not, for he needeth not my prayers; and seeing that he could forgive us all our sins, I am sure he is clean himself; therefore I need not to pray for him.' Those who heard her at once laid hands upon her, and took her

to a cage under London Bridge, and told her ' to cool herself there ! '

On June 18, no fewer than five godly women and two men were burnt together at Maidstone. The women's names were Joan Bradbridge, of Staplehurst, Petronil Appleby, of Maidstone (whose husband was burnt with her), the wife of John Manning, of Maidstone (whose Christian name is unknown), Katherine Allin (whose husband also was burnt with her), and a blind maiden named Elizabeth.

It is interesting to note here, while referring to the death of this blind girl, that, on the previous month, a blind man was burnt, together with a lame man, at Stratford-le-Bow. At the stake, the lame man said to the blind man : ' Be of good comfort, my brother ; for my Lord of London (Bonner) is our good physician. He will heal us both shortly ; thee of thy blindness, and me of my lameness.' And at Gloucester, on May 15, a blind *boy*, named Thomas Drury, was burnt alive, by men who seem to have been devoid of human feeling, when the interests of the Church of Rome were concerned. This boy, a few months previously, having heard that Bishop Hooper had arrived in Gloucester, there to be burnt on the next day, earnestly begged that he might be taken to the good Bishop, who examined him as to his faith, and then, with tears of

sympathy in his eyes, said to him : ' Ah, poor boy ! God hath taken from thee thine outward sight, for what consideration He knoweth. But He has given thee another sight much more precious, for He hath endowed thy soul with the eye of faith and knowledge. God give thee grace continually to pray unto Him that thou lose not that sight, for then shouldest thou be blind both in body and soul ! '

CHAPTER III

WOMEN MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

(*Continued*)

Joan Waste—Katherine Hut—Joan Horns—Elizabeth Thackville—Margaret Ellis—Anne Potten—Elizabeth Pepper—Agnes George—Joice Lewes—Margaret Hide—Agnes Stanley—Elizabeth Cooper—Cicely Ormes.

ON the first of August, 1556, another young woman, named Joan Waste, aged only twenty-two, and blind from her birth, was burnt alive at Derby. Her father bore the reputation of an honest poor man. He was a barber by trade, but seems to have afterwards taken up the work of a rope-maker. When Joan was about twelve years of age, she learnt how to knit stockings and other articles, and even to assist her father in his rope work. After a time she had the misfortune to lose both her father and mother by death, and then she went to live with her brother in the same town.

When Edward VI. came to the throne, and the Protestant religion was set up throughout the land, Joan learnt the truth of the Gospel in the

church, at which she became a regular attendant. What she heard created in her mind an intense longing to become possessed of the New Testament. To satisfy her wish she managed to save up enough money to buy a copy; but being totally blind she was, of course, quite unable to read it herself, and those were days in which reading by the blind was quite unknown. There was at the time a man whom she knew lying in the debtors' prison at Derby, and, as he was able to read, and had abundance of time on his hands, she went to him, taking her precious treasure with her, and induced him to read it to her. When he was not available, she went to John Pemerton, parish clerk of All Saints, Derby, who occasionally read portions to her. But when neither of them could help, so anxious was she to learn the Word of God, that, poor as she was, she paid people a few pence at a time, to read to her. In this way she was at last able to commit to memory several chapters. The result of all this was that she gained a spiritual enlightenment in the things of God which led her to cast off error.

All went well with her until Edward VI. died, and then, when Mary came to the throne, Joan was before long called upon to suffer for the truth she professed. It was not safe, so the Papists thought, that a woman like her should be allowed to go abroad; so they had her arrested

on a charge of heresy, and brought up for trial before Dr. Ralph Bayne, Bishop of Lichfield, and other priests and laymen. She was charged with denying the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated sacrament, and also with asserting that the sacrament should not be reserved over the altar. She told her persecutors that she believed all the Holy Scriptures taught her, and she besought them not to trouble her, being only a poor blind and unlearned woman. At the same time she plainly told them that she was ready to yield up her life in defence of the faith she professed. But her plea was in vain; she was ordered to be burnt alive.

They kept her in prison for a month or five weeks after sentence had been pronounced, and then a writ came down to Derby, ordering her execution.

On the day of her death this courageous young martyr was taken first of all to All Saints' Church, and placed before the pulpit, while the Chancellor of the Diocese, one Dr. Draycot, preached a furious sermon against her.

He told the people that Joan was condemned to death because she denied that the sacrament of the altar was the very body and blood of Christ, and therefore she had been cut off from the Catholic Church. She was blind in her bodily

eyes, but she was blind also in the eyes of her soul. Her body would soon be consumed with material fire, and then her soul would be burned in hell with everlasting fire, world without end. This furious bigot even went so far as to forbid the people to pray for her.

But Joan was not moved from her constancy. She was taken from church to a place called the Windmill Pit, holding her brother's hand as she walked through the streets. When she arrived at the stake, she asked the people to pray for her, and then she called aloud on Jesus for help, and continued thus calling until death released her.

The day after the blind boy was murdered at Gloucester, three innocent and godly women were burned alive in Smithfield. Their names were Katherine Hut, of Bocking, a widow; Joan Horns, of Billericay; and Elizabeth Thackville, of Great Burstead. The last two were unmarried. . These faithful ones were arrested by order of Sir John Mordaunt and Edward Tyrell, two magistrates, and sent up to London, together with Margaret Ellis, of Billericay, with the following letter to Bishop Bonner:

'Our humble commendations unto your Lordship. These shall be to advertise you that we have sent unto your good Lordship Joan Potter, the wife of Hugh Potter; James Harris, servant

of William Harris, of Bromhill; and Margaret Ellis, for that they be not conformable to the orders of the Church, nor to the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the altar, to use your Lordship's pleasure with them, as you think good; nothing doubting, with the punishment of these and others before sent unto your Lordship, but that the parishes of Great Burstead and Billericay shall be brought to good conformity. Thus committing your good Lordship to the tuition of Almighty God, we take our leave.—From Great Burstead, this present 2nd day of March, 1556.

'Your Lordship's to command,

'JOHN MORDAUNT, EDMUND TYRELL.'

These poor women, though true to their Saviour, were very illiterate. They were unable to give Bonner, when he examined them, an exact definition of a sacrament. They said that they did not know. Margaret Ellis was asked whether she had carried a candle in church on Candlemas Day, if she had received the sacrament on the previous Easter, according to the laws of the Church of Rome, whether she had received ashes on her head on Ash Wednesday, and had been to confession? She replied that she had not done any of these things, because her conscience would not permit her. But she acknowledged that two years previously she had received the

communion at Much Burstead from the vicar there, in remembrance of Christ's death and passion, and in a service which was conducted in English. Joan Horns said that she had begun to learn the faith she then professed when she was eleven years of age, in Edward VI.'s time, and that she was determined by God's assistance to continue in it. In answer to the charge that she did not believe the sacrament to be Christ Himself, she replied: 'If you can make your god to shed blood, or to show any condition of a true lively body, then will I believe you; but it is but bread, as touching the substance thereof.' As to the Church of Rome, she said to Bonner: 'My Lord, I forsake all its abominations; and from them, good Lord, deliver us.' Katherine Hut declared, as to the sacrament: 'I deny it to be God; because it is a dumb god, and made with men's hands.'

These four humble women were all sentenced to be burnt at the stake; but Margaret Ellis died in prison before the sentence was carried out. The remaining three were all burnt together on May 15, 1556, 'dying,' says Foxe, 'more joyfully in the flaming fire, than some of them that burned them did, peradventure, in their beds.'

The town of Ipswich is noted in the annals of the Reformation. There lived there, when

Queen Mary came to the throne, two humble women, faithful followers of the Gospel, named Anne Potten, wife of a brewer, and Joan Trunchfield, wife of a shoemaker. Early in Mary's reign, a youthful Protestant, Rose Nottingham, realising their danger, urged these two to flee from Ipswich. One of the two, probably Joan Trunchfield, replied: 'I know well that it is lawful enough to fly away; which remedy you may use, if you like. But my case standeth otherwise. I am tied to a husband, and have besides young children at home. And then I know not how my husband, being a carnal man, will take my departure from him; and, therefore, I am determined, for the love of Christ and His truth, to stand to the extremity of the matter.'

At first, Anne Potten seems to have felt her imprisonment very much, and was at times in great anxiety and trouble of mind. Joan Trunchfield appears to have been even more despondent than Anne; yet, when God's strength and the consolation of the Holy Ghost were most needed by these two women, they were granted to them abundantly. They were both condemned for their opinions on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They both said that 'Jesus Christ is ascended up into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God the Father, according to the Scriptures, and not in the sacrament.' It is remarkable

that, although Joan manifested, during her imprisonment, far more despondency than Anne, yet at the last their positions were in this respect reversed; for Joan, when at the stake, seemed the more comforted of the two, though Anne also died rejoicing in her Saviour. At the last they both addressed the crowd around them, earnestly urging them to lay hold on the Word of God, and to cast away from them men's inventions, especially those of the Romish Antichrist, with all his superstitions. They both died with their hands elevated towards heaven, in the attitude of prayer, calling upon God with their last breath.

We have now to return again to Stratford-le-Bow, where, on June 27, 1556, another great fire was lit by cruel and wicked men, haters of the Gospel, in which two women and eleven men were consumed, because they loved God's truth, and hated and repudiated the Pope's falsehoods and superstitions. The names of the two women were Elizabeth Pepper and Agnes George; the former was of the town of Colchester, and the latter of the parish of 'Barefold,' which some suppose to be identical with Bardfield. Elizabeth was the wife of a weaver, and Agnes, who was only twenty-six years old, of a farmer. It is remarkable that Richard George, Agnes' husband, had previously had another Protestant wife burnt at

Colchester. His is the only instance in the history of the Protestant martyrs, with which I am acquainted, in which two successive wives of one man died at the martyrs' stake. These thirteen prisoners were all brought before Dr. Darbyshire, Chancellor to Bishop Bonner. Agnes George told him, in reply to his questions, that she was arrested by Alderman Maynard, of Colchester; and Elizabeth Pepper said she was arrested also because she would not go to church. They were all condemned to death. On the following Sunday the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Feckenham, preached a special sermon against the condemned Protestants. A report of the sermon came to their knowledge, and this led to a confession of their faith being drawn up, which was signed by Agnes George and Elizabeth Pepper, as well as by all the men under sentence. Those were days when plain and strong language was used, because it was needed. These women complained that the Dean had defamed them in no fewer than sixteen points, and so, to let their friends know what they really believed, and for which they were about to die, they declared what they conceived to be the truth, *viz.*:

'1. There are but two sacraments in Christ's Church, that is, the sacrament of baptism and the Lord's Supper. For in these are contained the faith of Christ's Church; that is, the two

Testaments, the Law and the Gospel. The effect of the Law is repentance, and the effect of the Gospel remission of sins.

'2. We believe that there is a visible Church, wherein the Word of God is preached, and the Holy Sacraments truly ministered, visible to the wicked world, although it be not credited, and by the death of saints confirmed, as it was in the time of Elias the Prophet, as well as now.

'3. The See of Rome is the See of Antichrist, the congregation of the wicked, whereof the Pope is head under the Devil.

'4. The mass is not only a profanation of the Lord's Supper, but also a most blasphemous idol.

'5. God is neither spiritually nor corporeally in the sacrament of the altar, and there remaineth no substance in the same but only the substance of bread and wine.

'For these the articles of our belief we, being condemned to die, do willingly offer our corruptible bodies to be consumed in the fire; all with one voice assenting and consenting thereunto, and in no one point disagreeing from any of our former articles.

'Apparent also let it be known, that, being of the former articles before the bloody Bishop examined the said day and time, we affirmed to believe all that he or they could prove by the Scriptures. But he said that he would not stand to prove it with heretics, but said they themselves

were the Holy Church, and that we ought to believe them, or else to be cut off like withered branches.'

When these thirteen faithful ones came to die, the Sheriff acted a most deceitful part, to induce them to recant. The martyrs had been divided into two companies, so he went to one of these companies, and told them that the other company had recanted, and that therefore their lives would be saved. He then urged them to follow their example and recant also. They unanimously answered that their faith was not built on the example of men, but of God, and, therefore, like brave martyrs, they refused to give way.

Upon this the Sheriff went to the other company, and told them the same falsehood, but only to receive a similar answer. The eleven men were then tied to three stakes, and, strange to say, the women were not tied at all, but put unfettered into the fire. 'And so,' writes Foxe, 'they were all burned in one fire, with such love to each other, and constancy in our Saviour Christ, that it made all the lookers-on to marvel. The Lord grant us the like grace in the like need, according to the good pleasure of His will. Amen.'

A foremost place amongst the women martyrs of the year 1557 must be assigned to Joice Lewes. She was a lady of a good family, being nearly related to several of the nobility, and was brought up in every comfort and luxury the time could

provide. She was the only daughter of Mr. Thomas Curzon, of Croxall, in the county of Stafford. She was first married to Sir George Appleby, who was killed in a battle near Edinburgh, in the year 1547, at the early age of thirty-four, leaving two sons behind him. Some time after this his widow married a well-to-do gentleman named Thomas Lewes, residing at Mancetter, near Atherstone, Warwickshire. In 1555 she heard of the martyrdom of Laurence Saunders, a godly minister, who was burnt alive in Coventry in that year. Curiosity first seems to have moved her to make inquiries as to the religion for which he had suffered death, at a place only about twelve miles distant from her home. What she heard about that good man speedily raised serious doubts in her own mind concerning the faith in which she had been brought up. In the spiritual anxieties which consequently disturbed her, she fortunately had recourse to a most godly man, living near, named Robert Glover, who is described as 'a man of blessed memory, and a singular example, for his unfeigned godliness and manifold troubles which he suffered for the Gospel.' Mr. Glover, with great patience, instructed her in the way of God, proving to her from the Bible that the mass and many other Popish superstitions were odious in the sight of God. He also urged her to give up

the worldly amusements and vanities likely to withdraw her love from God.

The ministrations of this faithful man were blessed by God to the conversion of Joice Lewes, and to a determination to devote her life to His service. She began to hate the mass, and with her new views she, of course, did not care to attend the services in her parish church. At last her husband, in a fury, forced her there one day. But when the priest came down the aisle to sprinkle the people with holy water, she could not refrain from showing her dislike by turning her back. That was a kind of thing not to be tolerated in those days, especially when done before the whole parish in church, and by the leading lady of the neighbourhood. Accordingly Joice Lewes was denounced to the Bishop of the Diocese, on the charge of despising holy water.

A man was sent to Mancetter summoning her to appear before the Bishop to answer the charges brought against her. It so happened that the first person this man met when he reached the house was her husband. Now, although Thomas Lewes was a bigoted Papist, and by no means considerate towards his wife in matters of religion, his pride was touched when he read the summons. In an angry tone he told the man to take the summons back again, or else he would make him eat it! The messenger was thus placed in a

dilemma. He was afraid to take it back, lest he should get into trouble with the Bishop, and he had by no means any wish to eat the document. On the whole, he thought it best to brave Thomas Lewes, so he refused to take it back. Thereupon Lewes held a dagger before the man's heart, and threatened to run it into his body if he did not eat the document. The poor fellow actually ate it, and then Lewes gave him something to drink, and sent him away.

But for all this, Lewes and his wife were eventually compelled to attend before the Bishop. Lewes apologised and got off; but his wife told the Bishop plainly that by refusing holy water she had not offended God or His laws, and therefore she offered no apology for her conduct. The Bishop was exceedingly annoyed at her very proper answer, but he said as she was a gentlewoman he would give her another chance. So he bound over her husband in a sum of £100 to bring her up again before him in a month's time. Lewes entered into the bond, and took his wife back with him to Mancetter.

Joice Lewes gave herself to earnest prayer to God for guidance and help, and from time to time consulted again with Robert Glover. He urged her to do nothing out of vainglory, or to get herself a name in the world. When the month was nearly expired, Glover, with others, went to

her husband and urged him not to take his wife to the Bishop, but to save her by forfeiting the £100, rather than that he should by his own act send his own wife to the fire. But by this time bigotry had so blinded the eyes of Thomas Lewes, that, rejecting the advice of friends, and crushing within him any sparks remaining of natural affection, he took her to the Bishop. 'And so,' writes Foxe, 'like a murderer of his own wife, he carried her to the bloody Bishop, where she was examined, and found more stout than she was before death was threatened. And to begin withal, she was sent to such a stinking prison that a certain maid who was appointed to keep her company did swoon in the same prison.'

This Christian heroine was frequently examined while in prison; but on no account would she give way, or recant anything she had believed.

Bishop.—'Why do you not come to church, and receive her sacraments and sacramentals?'

Mrs. Lewes.—'Because I find not these things in God's Word which you so urge and magnify, as things most needful for men's salvation. If these things were in the same Word of God commanded, I would with all my heart receive, esteem, and believe them.'

Bishop.—'If thou wilt believe no more than is in the Scriptures concerning matters of religion, thou art in a damnable case.'

Of course Joice Lewes was condemned to death by fire, and handed over to the Sheriff that he might carry the sentence into execution. But the Sheriff had no love for a task of this kind. Instead of burning his prisoner, he kept her in ward until his year of office expired. But when another Sheriff in due course took his place, she was soon brought to the stake.

When the time drew near, Mrs. Lewes sent for some of her friends, and sought their advice as to how she should behave herself at the last, so that God might be glorified, and His people comforted and strengthened in their faith. She told them she was not afraid to die. 'As for the fear of death,' she said, 'when I behold the amiable countenance of Christ, my dear Saviour, the grim face of death doth not greatly trouble me.'

On the evening before her martyrdom, two priests went to the prison, and sent in word that they were come to hear her confession. She refused their services, sending them word that she had already confessed to Christ, and was sure she had received His forgiveness and absolution. As to the cause for which she was about to die, she did not think that was a sin to be confessed; on the contrary, with a joyful heart she thanked God that He permitted her to suffer death for His Word; but as to the absolution which the

priests offered her, as authorised by the Pope, she simply defied it from the bottom of her heart.

The priests, as they left, said to the Sheriff, 'Well, to-morrow her stoutness will be proved and tried; for although, perhaps, she has now some friends that whisper in her ears, to-morrow we shall see who dare be so hardy as to come near her.' They meant that any showing sympathy with her at the stake might be punished for it.

At eight o'clock on the morrow the Sheriff entered her prison, and in a very rough and unfeeling manner told her she had only an hour to live. One of her friends standing by said to her: 'Mistress Lewes, you have great cause to thank God, who will so speedily take you out of this world, and make you worthy to be a witness of His truth, and to bear record unto Christ, that He is the only Saviour.' And then the faithful servant of her Lord and Master said to the Sheriff, 'Master Sheriff, your message is welcome to me, and I thank my God that He will make me worthy to die in this quarrel.' There was no fear, no withdrawing from her faith, no dread of the future. God's strength was, in a very marked degree, manifested in her weakness. She had a long way to walk from the prison to that part of Lichfield where the stake was fixed. The crowd at the place was very great, and included many sympathisers. The martyr prayed aloud three

times, earnestly asking God to abolish the sacrifice of the mass, and to deliver the realm from Popery, to which many in the crowd around responded by saying aloud, 'Amen!'

By this time some drink had been brought to her in a cup, and then, taking it in her hand, after she had been tied to the stake, she cried out: 'I drink to all them who unfeignedly love the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and wish for the abolishment of Papistry!' Notwithstanding the opinion of the two priests the night before, many of her friends dared to press round and drink with her; and after her friends a great many women also followed their example. One of the priests present took down their names, and afterwards they were severely punished for showing sympathy with the martyred saint of God. Foxe says that 'when she was tied to the stake with the chain, she showed such a cheerfulness that it passed man's reason, being so well coloured in the face, and being so patient, that the most part of them that had honest hearts did lament, and even with tears bewail the tyranny of the Papists. When the fire was set upon her, she neither struggled nor stirred, but only lifted up her hands towards heaven, being dead very speedily.'

In a biography of Mrs. Lewes, written in the middle of the nineteenth century, by the Rev.

B. Richings, then Vicar of Mancetter, the author remarks: 'The four illustrious coronets of the Earldom of Howe, and the Baronies of De La Zouch, Teynham, and Scarsdale, with which the family of Mrs. Lewes is at present honoured, are but perishing gems when compared with that "crown of glory which fadeth not away." This devoted woman fell in a warfare in which she sought for the honour, immortality, and eternal life reserved in heaven for the faithful soldiers and servants of our Divine Redeemer. She followed the Captain of her salvation, and counted not her life dear unto herself. She was valiant for the truth. She shed her blood that Protestant truth might be the inheritance of her posterity and her country.'

In the year 1833 a tablet in memory of the martyr was erected in Mancetter Church. The following is the inscription:—

TO THE SACRED MEMORY
OF
MRS. LEWES
MARTYR;

'A Lady who, having witnessed in the presence her Persecutors a good confession, sealed the truth with her blood, and was burnt at Lichfield, A.D. 1557. First led by the cruel Persecutions of the Church of Rome to doubt whether it could be the Church of Christ, she was afterwards indebted to the pious family of the Glovers for that more

THE BURNING OF JOICE LEWES.

"I drink to all them who unfeignedly love the gospel of Jesus Christ, and wish for the abolishment of Papistry!"

Joice Lewes.

perfect knowledge of the Truth which became dearer to her than life itself. Her love to Christ enabled her to bear with patience a very long and severe imprisonment; yea, she was not only willing to be bound, but also to die for the Name of the Lord Jesus; meekly desiring that all the circumstances of her death might be so ordered, that her friends might be comforted, her Saviour glorified, and His enemies confounded. When chained to the stake, she manifested a cheerful serenity, and a countenance so unchanged as to astonish all who beheld her; and when the flames burst around her, standing unmoved, she only lifted up her hands towards Heaven, whither her triumphant spirit speedily ascended, entering into the presence and joy of her Lord.

'"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."'

On April 12, 1557, Margaret Hide and Agnes Stanley, in company with three men, were put to death in one fire at Smithfield. They were examined, soon after their arrest, by Darbyshire, Chancellor to Bishop Bonner, which Chancellor afterwards became a Jesuit priest. The prisoners told him that they thought the Church of Rome was no part or member of the true Catholic Church, of which they claimed to be members. They admitted that they thought the English

Church Service put forth in the time of Edward VI. was good, godly, and thoroughly Catholic, and that it ought still to be used in all parish churches. They also admitted that they did not think themselves bound to come to processions in church, or to bear a candle or taper on Candlemas Day, or to take ashes upon Ash Wednesday, to bear palms on Palm Sunday, to creep to the cross, or to receive holy water,' or to confess their sins unto a priest, or to follow the determinations of what they termed the erroneous and Babylonical Church of Rome.

In due course they were called upon to say why they thought sentence of death should not be passed upon them. Margaret Hide said: 'My Lord, you have no cause to give sentence against me; for I am in the true faith and opinion, and will never forsake it; but I do wish I were more strong in it than I am.' When Bishop Bonner called on Agnes Stanley to speak, she was not one whit less courageous than Margaret Hide: 'My Lord,' she bravely answered, 'I had rather every hair of my head were burned than that I forsake my faith and opinion, which is the true faith. My Lord, whereas you say I am a heretic, I am none; neither yet will I believe you, nor any man that is wise will believe as you do. And as for these that ye say be burnt for heresy, I believe they are true martyrs before

God ; wherefore I will not go from my faith and opinion as long as I live.'

Among other cathedral cities the martyrs' fires have been lit more than once in Norwich. On July 13, 1557, one of these fires was lit to burn Elizabeth Cooper and Simon Miller. Elizabeth was an uneducated woman, the wife of a pewterer residing in Norwich. It seems that some time before her final trial she had got into trouble owing to her profession of the Protestant religion, but had, in a moment of weakness, recanted. But her act of apostasy had given her great unhappiness, for her conscience was troubled. One day, therefore, she went into St. Andrew's Church, in that city, while service was going on, and there, before the whole congregation, she rose and told the people how sorry she was for what she had done, and that she now publicly recanted her recantation. She expressed a hope that they would not be deceived in matters of religion, nor follow her example when she renounced the Protestant religion. A speech of this kind caused intense excitement in the church. It seems the Sheriff was one of the congregation that day, for a man named Bacon rose, as soon as Elizabeth had finished, and asked : 'Master Sheriff ! will you suffer this ? ' The result of the appeal was that before many hours

had passed by, Elizabeth Cooper found herself in prison. There was no mercy for such an offence as this, and in due course she was burnt alive. When the fire first touched her, she screamed with pain, whereupon the other martyr with her, Simon Miller, said to her : 'Be strong, and of a good cheer; for, good sister, we shall have a joyful and sweet supper.' From that moment she stood perfectly quiet and still, until the fire had done its fatal work.

Once more a martyr's fire was kindled at Norwich, on the 23rd day of the following September. This time only one victim was put to death. This was a young woman, aged 32 years, named Cicely Ormes, the wife of a worsted weaver residing in Norwich. It seems that she was one of those who were looking on while Elizabeth Cooper and Simon Miller were burned in the previous July, and had then uttered words which manifested sympathy with those two martyrs. A kindly feeling for suffering Protestants was held by the priests as a crime in those days, as faithful Cicely found out to her cost. She was arrested on the information of a man named Sprouston, who had heard her speak favourably of the martyrs, and she was lodged in prison. Soon she had to appear before the Chancellor of the Diocese, named Dunning, who examined her :

Chancellor.—' What have you to say to the sacrament of Christ's body ? '

Cicely.—'I believe that it is the sacrament of the body of Christ.'

Chancellor.—Yea; but what is that that the priest holdeth over his head?'

Cicely.—'It is bread; and if you make it any better, it is worse.'

Cicely was called up once more before the Chancellor, who offered her life and liberty if she would go to church. Then, he said, she might hold her tongue, and believe as she liked. She plainly told him she would never be a party to such a wicked scheme, for she was sure that if she acted such a deceptive part, God would surely plague her. Once more the Chancellor spoke. He told her that she was an unlearned, ignorant, and foolish woman; but as he could not move her from her loyalty to her Saviour, he gave sentence and ordered her to be burnt alive.

The sentence was carried out between seven and eight o'clock on the morning of September 23, in the presence of the Sheriffs and about two hundred people. Cicely was to be tied to the same stake at which Elizabeth Cooper and Simon Miller had been burnt a few months before. When she came to it, she knelt down, and offered an earnest prayer to God. Then she arose and addressed the people in the following words:

'Good people! I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three

persons and one God. This do I not, nor will I recant. But I recant utterly from the bottom of my heart the doings of the Pope of Rome, and all his Popish priests and shavelings. I utterly refuse and will never have to do with them again, by God's grace. And, good people! I would that you should not report of me that I believe to be saved in that I offer myself here unto the death for the Lord's cause; but I believe to be saved by the death and passion of Christ; and this my death is and shall be a witness of my faith unto you all here present. Good people! as many of you as believe as I believe, pray for me.'

When she had finished her address to those around her, Cicely approached the stake, and putting her hand on it, exclaimed: 'Welcome the cross of Christ!' She noticed, as she drew her hand back, that it was stained by the wood which had burnt the other two martyrs to death. This led her to approach the stake once more, when she kissed it, saying: 'Welcome the sweet cross of Christ.' When the fire began to burn around her the martyr cried out aloud: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' She then folded her hands across her breast, looked up to heaven, and from that moment seemed as though she felt no bodily pain whatever, but quietly fell asleep in Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

(*Concluded*)

Alice Mount—Rose Allin—Agnes Silverside—Helen Ewring—Elizabeth Folkes—Agnes Bongeor—Margaret Thurston—Margaret Mearing—Barbara Final—Widow of Bradbridge—Wife of Wilson—Alice Benden—Wife of Prest—Alice Driver.

AND now let us return once more to the town of Colchester, where, on August 2, 1557, two martyrs' fires were lit in one day, the first between six and seven o'clock in the morning, and the second the same afternoon. Ten Protestants in all were burnt in Colchester that day, six of them in the morning, and four of them in the afternoon. Five of these were women. Three of those burnt in the afternoon were from one family. They were William Mount, Alice Mount, his wife, and Rose Allin, the daughter of Alice Mount by a previous husband. About a year before their death, they had, with about twenty others, been arrested and sent up to London to Bishop Bonner, on a charge of heresy. But, apparently owing to the influence of Cardinal

Pole, they had all been sent back again to their homes, and set at liberty after signing a confession of faith of a very weak and watery kind.

But they had not been long at home when the fire of God's grace within them began to burn brightly again. Then William Mount, with his wife and daughter, became Christ's missionaries amongst their friends and neighbours, seeking to bring them to a saving knowledge of that blessed Gospel which had brought peace and joy into their own souls. Their parish priest was exceedingly angry when he learnt what was going on, and how successful the missionary labours of his parishioners had been. At this time William Mount was sixty-one years old, his wife forty-one years old, and her daughter only twenty. They all resided at Much Bentley, in Essex. From there the parish priest wrote a letter of complaint to Bishop Bonner, which gives us an interesting glimpse of the state of affairs in an Essex village during the reign of Queen Mary :

'RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD,' wrote the priest, 'after my bounden duty done in most humble wise, these shall be to signify unto your Lordship the state of our parties concerning religion. And first, since the coming down of the twenty-two rank heretics dismissed from you, the detestable sort of schismatics were never so bold since the

King and Queen's Majesties' reign, as they are now at this present. In Much Bentley, where your Lordship is Patron of the Church, since William Mount, and Alice his wife, with Rose Allin, her daughter, came home, they do not only absent themselves from the church, and service of God, but do daily allure many other away from the same, which before did outwardly show signs and tokens of obedience.

'They assemble together upon the Sabbath day in the time of Divine Service, sometimes in one house, sometimes in another, and there keep their privy conventicles and schools of heresy. . . . I pray God some of your officers prove not favourers of heretics. The rebels are stout in the town of Colchester.

'The Ministers of the Church are hemmed at in the open streets, and called knaves. The blessed sacrament of the altar is blasphemed and railed upon in every alehouse and tavern. Prayer and fasting is not regarded. Seditious talks and news are rife, both in town and country, in as ample and large manner as though there had no honourable Lords and Commissioners been sent for reformation thereof. . . . Whereupon, the heretics are wonderfully encouraged, to the no little discomfort of good and Catholic people.'

There was, of course, no foundation for the

charge brought against these good people of 'seditious talks,' as we understand sedition in this twentieth century. The Romanists considered every person who dissented from their creed a seditious man, though he never said a word against the temporal rule of Queen Mary and her Government. Neither was there any foundation for the charge that the Protestants neglected prayer. On the contrary, the Protestants of those days, and especially those who laid down their lives for the truth, were pre-eminently men and women of prayer. As to their not regarding fasting, in all probability what is meant is that they did not observe the fast days.

The result of this priest's action was that, at the early hour of two o'clock on the morning of March 7, 1557, the magistrates and their officers, under the direction of William Tyrrel, knocked loudly at the door of William Mount, who with his wife and daughter were, of course, asleep at the time. They demanded admittance, and when the door was opened they rushed into the bedroom, and told Mount and his wife that they must get up at once, and go with them to Colchester. Alice Mount was ill at the time, and asked the officers to allow her daughter to go and fetch her some drink to relieve her pain. Leave was given, and then Rose Allin, taking a pot in one hand and a candle in the other, went out to

draw drink for her mother. As she was returning to the house, William Tyrrel met her, and ordered her to give her father and mother advice to behave better in future, 'as good Catholic people.' Thereupon the following conversation took place :

Rose.—'Sir, they have a better instructor than I ; for the Holy Ghost doth teach them, I hope, Who, I trust, will not suffer them to err.'

Tyrrel.—'Why, art thou still in that mind, thou naughty housewife ? Marry, it is time to look upon such heretics indeed.'

Rose.—'Sir, with that which you call heresy do I worship my Lord God. I tell you truth.'

Tyrrel.—'Then I perceive you will burn with the rest, for company's sake.'

Rose.—'No, sir, not for company's sake, but for Christ's sake, if so be I am compelled ; and I hope in His mercies, if He call me to it, He will enable me to bear it.'

Tyrrel was evidently one of those who delight in human suffering, as Rose soon found to her cost. She had addressed him in modest and respectful language ; but, making no allowance for this, or her age or sex, the tyrant proceeded to an act of shameful torture on the poor unoffending girl. He took a burning candle, and placed it under her hand, and burnt it crosswise over the back of it, until the sinews cracked asunder.

'Why,' he exclaimed to his victim, 'do you

not cry ? ' She replied that she had more reason to rejoice and thank God than to cry. When Tyrrel had finished his torture, Rose quietly asked : ' Sir, have you done what you will do ? ' His reply was : ' Yes ; and if you think it was not done well, then mend it ' ; to which her rejoinder was :

' Mend it ! Nay, the Lord mend you, and give you repentance, if it be His will. And now, if you think it good, begin at the feet, and burn to the head also. For he that set you at work will pay you your wages some day, I warrant you.'

Some time afterwards Rose Allin, talking to a friend, explained how cruelly Tyrrel had tortured her, and then she added : ' While my one hand was burning, I, having a pot in the other hand, might have laid him on the face with it, if I wished, for no man held my hand to hinder me. But I thank God with all my heart I did not do so.'

Father, mother, and daughter were all arrested, and taken to Colchester prison. With other prisoners they were examined before their judges on June 23. William Mount told them that their sacrament of the altar was an abominable idol, and that he was of the opinion that if he were to observe any part of their Popish proceedings he should displease God, and bring His curse upon him. Then his wife, Alice Mount, was examined,

and proved as hard to move as her husband had been, for she simply said that she agreed with all he had stated. And then her daughter, young Rose Allin, was examined, and right bravely did she face her foes. She boldly told them that auricular confession and the Popish sacraments 'stunk in the sight of God,' and she dare not have anything to do with them. She was not a member of their Church, for they were members, she declared, of Antichrist, and, unless they repented, they would have the reward of Antichrist. Then they asked her what she thought about the See of Rome, and whether she would obey the Pope or not? She answered that she was none of the Pope's children. 'As for his See,' she exclaimed, 'it is for crows, kites, owls, and ravens to swim in, such as you are. But, by God's grace, I shall not swim in that See while I live, neither will I have anything to do with it.'

The father, mother, and daughter were, thereupon, all sentenced to die together at the stake. When Rose returned from the court to her prison, instead of crying and bemoaning her lot, she sang aloud with great joy! And so, in due course, on the afternoon of August 2, they were all burnt alive together in Colchester, having John Johnson as their companion in suffering for the truth of the Gospel. At the stake they all

showed marvellous triumph and joy, and exhorted the people to flee idolatry.

On the morning of that day three other women were burnt in Colchester, *viz.*, Agnes Silverside, Helen Ewring, and Elizabeth Folkes. Agnes Silverside was, at the time of her arrest, sixty years old, and was the widow of a married priest residing at Colchester. A short time before she was sent to prison she received a letter from Ralph Allerton, then in prison waiting for his execution as a Protestant martyr. Allerton could get no ordinary ink with which to write his letter, so he wrote it in the blood of a fellow-prisoner. In that letter he praised her 'constant faith and love unfeigned.' A priest named Boswell wrote to Bishop Bonner about her: 'She saith that the sacrament is an idol, and ought not to be worshipped with knocking, kneeling, nor holding up of hands, for all that is idolatry. She will not come to church, she will not hear mass, she will not be confessed of any priest; she saith that none can remit sin but only God; she is a froward, obstinate heretic, and willing to burn her old rotten bones.' The last clause of this letter shows the bitter hatred this priest had for this saint of God. She had become to him, what the Apostle was of old, 'the offscouring of all things.' When brought before her judges the prisoner answered

their questions with remarkable wisdom and courage. But, with her companions, she was sentenced to death.

Ellen Ewring was about forty-five years of age when arrested, and was the wife of a miller dwelling at Colchester. Elizabeth Folkes was a domestic servant, in the employ of a Colchester clothier, and only twenty years of age when called upon to yield her life for Christ's cause. The priest Boswell described her as 'a tall, well-favoured young wench, and willing to be reformed; whereupon, at the request of certain of her friends, she is delivered and committed to the safe keeping of one Henry Ashby, of Colchester, a good Catholic man, who hath taken upon him to reconcile her accordingly, or else to feed her with barley bread until she be reconciled.'

But Boswell was very much mistaken in his opinion of Elizabeth Folkes. That faithful young servant had no intention of being again reconciled to the Church of Rome, and had said nothing to justify such a hope as that expressed by the priest. Before long her enemies realised that she was more courageous, if that were possible, than the other faithful women whom they brought to the fire. She was asked by her judges, whether she believed the presence of Christ's body and blood were in the sacrament substantially and

really? Her plain and emphatic answer was that she believed such a doctrine 'was a substantial lie, a real lie.' As to the mass, confession to priests, and the authority of the Pope, she told them that, by the grace of God, she utterly detested and abominated them all from the bottom of her heart. When the sentence of condemnation was read to her, she knelt down before her judges, and, lifting her hands to heaven, she thanked God that ever she was born to behold such a happy day, in which the Lord had counted her worthy to suffer for the testimony of Christ. 'And, Lord,' said this humble maidservant, 'if it be Thy will, forgive them that have thus done against me; for they know not what they do.' Then, rising up, she addressed her judges, telling them that if they did not repent of their wickedness in putting Protestants to death, that very bar would be a witness against them at the Day of Judgment, testifying that they had there, that day, shed innocent blood.

And so, as already stated, on the morning of August 2 these noble witnesses for Jesus, with three men martyrs, were brought forth to die. After praying earnestly together round the stake, Elizabeth Folkes took off her petticoat, to give it to her mother, who had the courage to be there and had just kissed her daughter, and parted with her. But even this poor gift was not allowed.

When the six martyrs were tied to the stake, they all clapped their hands together for joy, while hundreds of sympathisers standing round, not fearing the wrath of the priests, cried aloud: 'The Lord strengthen them; the Lord comfort them; the Lord pour His mercies upon them!' And so, with sounds like these greeting their ears, these faithful men and women went to hear their Heavenly Master and Saviour say to each of them: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

When the ten martyrs, five men and five women, whose deaths I have just recorded, were sentenced to death, two other women were sentenced, and for the same offences. Their names were Agnes Bongeor and Margaret Thurston. When the other ten were brought out to die, Agnes would have been brought out also, but at the last moment it was found that the writ, by mistake, ordered the execution of 'Agnes Bowyer,' instead of 'Agnes Bongeor.' So she was sent back to prison, until a new writ was issued. It seems strange to us in the twentieth century to learn that she was greatly troubled because her death was postponed. Her little baby had been with her in prison until the eve of August 2, and possibly its absence for the next few weeks added to her sadness; but that was not why she wept so bitterly, and longed for death rather than life.

It seemed to her as though God, for her unworthiness, had deprived her of a great honour, to die for His cause. But in this she was mistaken.

It is rather uncertain what was the cause that Margaret Thurston's death was postponed. To her it seemed that the jailer had forgotten to take her out of prison with the others on that fateful August 2. At one time she had gone back from the truth, and this greatly troubled her ; but she repented of her sin, and determined, by God's grace, to stand firm in the Gospel in future, no matter what it might cost her. On September 17 these two women were brought out to die together, in the presence of their former friends and neighbours, and to bear witness for God's truth before their enemies. They both fell down together on their knees before the stake, seeking aid and strength, not from saints and angels, but from God alone, and so—as Foxe writes—'they with great joy and glorious triumph gave up their souls, spirits, and lives into the hands of the Lord, under Whose government and protection, for Christ's sake, we beseech Him to grant us His holy defence and help evermore.'

The case of the martyr, Margaret Mearing, who on December 21, 1557, was burnt to death at Smithfield, with her minister, John Rough, formerly a Romish priest, is remarkable in one

respect. This excellent man had long had a distrust of Margaret, and seems to have thought her a Romish spy on the congregation which he served. He felt so strongly about the matter, that on the very day before his arrest he actually excommunicated Margaret in the presence of the congregation. Margaret was as true and sincere as the minister himself, and it was indeed a singular coincidence that they should die together. She seems to have felt her unjust excommunication acutely, but had her Christian revenge on her minister by doing everything possible for his bodily comfort while he was in prison. She found out that a man named Roger Sergeant had betrayed John Rough, having laid an information against him to Bishop Bonner. Without any delay she went straight to Sergeant's house, and asked: 'Does Judas dwell here?' She was told that no such person lived in that house. 'No!' she exclaimed. 'Dwelleth not Judas here that betrayed Christ? His name is Sergeant'! But she was not able to speak with him, and so she went back to her home again.

On the following Friday, Margaret was standing in Mark Lane, London, talking to a female friend, when she spied Bonner's officer walking down the street in the direction of her house. 'Whither goeth yonder fine fellow?' asked Margaret of her friend, adding immediately: 'I think surely

he goes to my house.' Presently she saw the officer enter her door. Instead of running away, as many a timid man or woman would have done under the circumstances, she boldly went after him, and asked him what he had come for? 'For you,' was his reply; 'you must go with me.' 'Here I am,' said the brave woman, 'I will go with you.' It was the last time she ever saw her home. The man took her straight to prison. So shamelessly did Bonner hurry matters against her that on the following Wednesday she was burnt with Rough in Smithfield, as a Protestant heretic. As to the doctrines she professed, she said to Bonner: 'I will stand to them unto the death; for the very angels of heaven do laugh you to scorn, to see the abominations you use in church.' Margaret Mearing kept her word. She stood firm to the last.

And now let us return to Canterbury, where, on June 19, 1557, three men and four women were burnt together. We have no particulars as to the cases of three out of these four women martyrs; all that we know is that one was a widow named Barbara Final; another was also a widow, whose husband's name was Bradbridge; while the third was the wife of a man named Wilson. The fourth was Alice Benden, the wife of Edward Benden, of Staplehurst, a bigoted

Papist, and a shameless persecutor of his own wife.

Alice Benden was first of all, after her arrest, taken to the town of Cranbrook, where she appeared before a magistrate named Roberts. He asked her, why she did not go to church? She said she could not do so with a good and clear conscience, because there was much idolatry committed in it against the glory of God. She had to put up with a great deal of ridicule, as had, in fact, nearly every one of our Protestant martyrs. Roberts sent her to prison, where she remained fourteen days, and then her husband, hoping to bring her back to Popery, brought influence to bear on the Bishop of Dover to secure her release. She was brought before this Bishop, who asked her if she would go home, and go to church? She replied that if she had been willing to go to church she would never have been sent to prison. 'Will you,' asked the Bishop, 'go home, and go to confession to your parish priest?' 'No,' she answered, 'that I will not.' 'Well,' he exclaimed, 'go your ways home, and go to church when you will.'

She was released from prison for a time, and sent back to Staplehurst. On the following Saturday her husband told her she must go to church the next day; but she positively refused to do anything of the kind. Edward Benden

stayed his hand for another fortnight before he took further action, and then he did that which has brought perpetual contempt on his name. He was not only the means of sending his wife to prison again, and thus to her death, which he knew would be the probable result of his act; but he even took money from the constable to pay him for conveying his own wife to prison!

Before, however, he was able to carry out his evil purposes, his wife heard about his conduct, and, then, rather than allow him so to degrade himself, she went herself direct to the constable, and asked him to take her to the Castle of Canterbury. He was not able to go with her, but lent her his boy to show her the way, and thus her husband lost his money. In Canterbury Castle the prisoner remained until January 22, and then her husband came and tried to get her released. Whether he was ashamed of himself for his past misconduct, or not, we cannot tell; but one thing is certain—he failed in his efforts. The Bishop of Dover, to whom he applied, told him that his wife was an obstinate heretic, and therefore he could not release her.

Benden next tried to get his wife's brother, Roger Hall, into trouble. Roger was a Protestant, and therefore Edward Benden informed the Bishop as to what he was, in the hope that he,

too, might be arrested. 'My Lord,' he said, 'she hath a brother whose name is Roger Hall, that resorteth unto her. If your Lordship could keep him from her, she would turn; for he comforteth her, giveth her money, and persuadeth her not to return or relent.' On this information the Bishop gave orders that if Roger Hall came to see his sister in prison he should be made a prisoner. And then, probably to prevent her brother coming near her, he ordered that Alice Benden should be moved from Canterbury Castle and imprisoned in a vault underground, beneath the residences of the prebends of the cathedral. It had a window from which, by looking up to a height of about seven feet and a half, Alice could just see anybody who came close up to the building; but nothing else. There, in that dismal hole, Alice was kept for nine weary weeks, during which no one was allowed to see her but her jailer, who was a bell-ringer. During the whole of that time she was not even allowed to change any portion of her clothing, and was allowed, for her sustenance, only a miserable five farthings a day, being a penny a day for bread, and a farthing for drink. No wonder that under these depressing circumstances she became for a time a most sorrowful woman, sadly bewailing her miserable condition. But after a time God sent her His heavenly consolation,

in answer to her earnest cries. One night, while she was sorrowfully repeating to herself the language of the Psalmist: 'Why art thou so heavy, O my soul?' a sudden rush of heavenly joy filled her soul, which never left her until her death.

On the twenty-fifth of the following March, Alice Benden was once more brought before the Bishop of Dover. She was by that time in a sad state of ill-health, owing to the cold in her dungeon, where no fire was allowed her, and to the fact that for nine weeks she had been in an almost starving condition. She was lame, and not able to move without great pain. Yet the spirit within her was not crushed, but was as brave and strong as ever.

Once more the Bishop asked her if she would go home and go to church, and promised her great favour if she would only do as he wished. There was no hesitancy in her reply. 'I am,' she said, 'thoroughly persuaded by the great extremity you have already shown me, that you are not of God, and that your doings are not godly. I see that you seek my utter destruction.' The Bishop could do nothing with her; so he sent her to prison once more, but, fortunately, to a healthier place. She remained in this prison until the end of April, when she was again brought before her judges, who, this time, sentenced her to be burnt

alive. She spent her last days in Canterbury Castle, where she was detained until June 19, when, with the three men and three women mentioned above, she was brought out to die. Foxe adds, that being brought to the stake, these seven blessed martyrs 'knelt down, and made their humble prayers unto the Lord, with such zeal and affection, that even the enemies of the Cross of Christ could not but like it. When they had made invocation together, they rose and went to the stake, where, being compassed with horrible flames of fire, they yielded their souls and lives gloriously into the hands of the Lord, unto whose eternity the Son of God bring us all. Amen!'

Those who from a worldly standpoint are termed ignorant and unlearned are often wise in spiritual and heavenly things. One of these wise ones for eternity was a poor woman named Prest, who, in the closing years of Queen Mary's reign, lived near Launceston, in the diocese of Exeter. She had never learnt to read, yet she possessed a most marvellous knowledge of the Bible. It was her love for the Word of God which first brought her into trouble, when about fifty-four years of age. She was first of all persecuted by her husband and children, all bigoted adherents of Rome. Much against her will they forced her to go to mass, and to take

part in many superstitious ceremonies. At last she found it necessary, if she were to escape this kind of persecution, to leave her husband and children, and to earn her own living by spinning. After a time, however, she returned to her home, and soon after she was denounced to the Bishop of Exeter by some of her neighbours, as a heretic, whereupon she was arrested and taken to Exeter to answer the charges brought against her. Fortunately, a record of her examination by the Bishop has been preserved, from which I give the following extracts :

Bishop.—'Thou foolish woman. I hear that you have spoken certain words against the blessed sacrament of the altar, the body of Christ. Fie for shame ! Thou art an unlearned person, and a woman. Wilt thou meddle with such high matters, which all the doctors in the world cannot define ? Keep thy work, and meddle with that thou hast to do. And if it be as I am informed, thou art worthy to be burned.'

Woman.—'I am a poor woman, and do live by my hands, getting a penny truly, and of that I get I give part to the poor.'

Bishop.—'That is well done. Art thou not a man's wife ? '

Woman.—'In the cause of Christ and His truth, when I must either forsake Christ or my husband, I am content to stick only to Christ,

my Heavenly Spouse, and renounce the other. I will rather die than I will do any worship to that foul idol, which with your mass you make a god.'

Bishop.—'Yea, you callet, will you say that the sacrament of the altar is a foul idol?'

Woman.—'Yea, truly; there never was such an idol as your sacrament is made of your priests, and commanded to be worshipped of all men.'

Bishop.—'Lo, she hath heard prattling among these new preachers, or heard some peevish book. Alas! poor woman! thou art deceived.'

Woman.—'No, my Lord, what I have learned was of godly preachers, and of godly books which I have heard read. And if you will give me leave I will declare a reason why I will not worship the sacrament.'

Bishop.—'Say on. I am sure it will be goodly gear.'

Woman.—'Truly such gear as I will lose this poor life of mine for.'

Bishop.—'Then you will be a martyr, good wife. Say thy mind.'

Woman.—'I will demand of you, whether you can deny your creed, which doth say that Christ doth perpetually sit at the right hand of His Father, both body and soul, until He come again? or whether He be there in heaven our Advocate, and do make prayer for us unto God His Father?

If it be so, He is not here in the earth, in a piece of bread. If He be not here, and if He do not dwell in temples made with hands, but in heaven, what! shall we seek Him here? If He did offer His body once for all, why make you a new offering? If with once offering He made all perfect, why do you with a false offering make all imperfect? If He be to be worshipped in spirit and truth, why do you worship a piece of bread? If He be eaten and drunken in faith and truth; if His flesh be not profitable to be among us, why do you say you make His body and flesh, and say it is profitable for body and soul? Alas! I am a poor woman, but, rather than do as you do, I would live no longer.'

Bishop.—'I promise you, you are a jolly Protestant! I pray you in what schools have you been brought up?'

Woman.—'I have upon the Sundays visited the sermons; * and there have I learned such things as are so fixed in my breast that death shall not separate them.'

Bishop.—'O foolish woman! Who will waste his breath upon thee, or such as thou art? But how chancest it that thou wentest away from thy husband?'

Woman.—'Sir, I laboured for my living; and

* She meant the Protestant sermons preached in the parish churches during the reign of Edward VI.

as my Master Christ counselled me, when I was persecuted in one city I fled into another.'

Bishop.—'Who persecuted thee?'

Woman.—'My husband and my children. For when I would have him leave idolatry, and worship God in heaven, he would not hear me; but he, with his children, rebuked me, and troubled me. I fled not for whoredom, nor for theft, but because I would be no partaker with him and his of that foul idol the mass. And wheresoever I was, as oft as I could, I made excuses not to go to the Popish Church. But God give me grace to go to the true Church.'

Bishop.—'The true Church! what dost thou mean?'

Woman.—'Not your Popish Church, full of idols and abominations; but where three or four are gathered together in the name of God, to that Church will I go as long as I live.'

Bishop.—'Belike, then, you have a Church of your own. Well, let this mad woman be put down in prison, until we send for her husband!'

The accused was returned to prison, and her husband sent for. The Bishop's Chancellor, apparently moved by pity, persuaded the Bishop that Prest's wife was not quite right in her mind, though of this there was no real evidence whatever. Anyhow, the plea led to her liberty for a time. She was detained in the house of the

keeper of the prison, where she worked as a servant, with leave to go about the city, where she talked to the people of the truth of the Gospel, and warned them against the errors of Popery. When her husband came to Exeter, in obedience to the summons of the Bishop, she refused to go back with him, for well she knew that if she returned home a life of bitter persecution awaited her. After a time the priests visited her again, and tried to persuade her to give up her Protestantism. But a wisdom was given to her from on high, which all her opponents were unable to resist. Especially they tried to make her believe in the real presence; but she told them plainly that they ought to be ashamed to say that a piece of bread could be turned into the natural body of Christ, which bread might afterwards grow musty, and even be eaten by mice! 'Let it,' she said to them, 'be your god, it shall not be mine; for my Saviour sitteth on the right hand of God, and doth pray for me.'

An old friar next came to see her, and asked her what she had to say about the Pope. She replied: 'I say that he is Antichrist and the devil.' The friar and the Papists with him laughed at her for saying this; but she sternly rebuked them for their levity. 'You have,' she said, 'more need to weep than to laugh. . . . I defy him and all his falsehood. And get you away from

me ; you do but trouble my conscience.' 'Why,' said the friar, 'thou foolish woman, we come to thee for thy profit, and soul's health.' The 'good woman' could not see it, and so she replied :

'Do you not damn souls, when you teach the people to worship idols, stocks and stones, the work of men's hands ? and to worship a false god of your own making, of a piece of bread ? and teach that the Pope is God's Vicar, and hath power to forgive sins ? and that there is a Purgatory, when God's Son hath by His passion purged all ? and say you make God, and sacrifice Him, when Christ's body was a sacrifice once for all ? Do you not teach the people to number their sins in your ears, and say that they be damned if they confess not at all ; when God's Word saith, "Who can number his sins ?" Do you not promise them trentals and dirges, and masses for souls, and sell your prayers for money, and make them buy pardons, and trust to such foolish inventions of your own imaginations ? Do you not altogether against God ? Do ye not teach us to pray upon beads, and to pray unto saints, and say that they can pray for us ? Do you not make holy water and holy bread to frighten the devils ? Do ye not a thousand more abominations ? And yet you say that you have come for my profit, and to save my soul !

No, no; One hath saved me. Farewell you with your salvation!'

During the time the prisoner enjoyed a temporary liberty, she went one day into St. Peter's Church, Exeter, where she saw a Dutchman putting new noses on the images, the original noses having been knocked off by authority in the reign of the Protestant King Edward VI. 'What a madman you are,' she said to the man, 'to make those new noses, which within a few days shall all lose their heads!' The Dutchman answered her by denouncing her to the authorities. This led to her being again sent to prison, where she remained until she was taken out to die.

While again in prison she was visited by priests sent by the Bishop, whose exhortations were in vain. She was also visited by a few friends of the Gospel, who were deeply impressed by her manner and conversation. They afterwards declared that they never met with any woman so faithful and constant, and so full of godly exhortations to those whom she addressed. 'She was,' says Foxe, 'tried by flattery, with many fair promises; she was tried with her husband, her goods and children; but nothing could prevail, her heart was fixed; she had cast her anchor, utterly contemning this wicked world; a rare example of constancy to all professors of the Gospel.'

When flatteries, promises, and threats had alike failed to move her, the prisoner was at length brought in to the Guildhall, Exeter, before the Bishop and several magistrates of the county. They told her to go home to her husband, and not trouble herself any more about the matters with which she was charged. 'You are an unlearned woman,' they said to her, 'and are not able to answer such high matters.' 'I am not learned,' she humbly replied, 'yet with my death I am content to be a witness of Christ's death; and I pray you make no long delay with me. My heart is fixed; I will never say otherwise, nor turn to your superstitious doings.' The Bishop told her she was led by the devil. 'No, my Lord,' she replied, 'it is the Spirit of God which leadeth me, and who called me in my bed, and at midnight opened His truth to me.' At this there was a great roar of laughter in the court; but she bore it all meekly and patiently, for Christ's sake.

The result of her trial might easily have been foreseen. She was found guilty, and sentenced to be burnt in flames until she was consumed. When she heard the sentence she lifted up her hands and thanked God. 'I thank Thee, my Lord, my God,' she exclaimed. 'This day have I found that which I long sought.' After her sentence her life was once more offered to her,

if she would recant. 'Nay,' she bravely replied, 'that I will not! God forbid that I should lose the life eternal, for this carnal and short life. I will never turn from my Heavenly Husband, to my earthly husband; from the fellowship of angels, to mortal children. And if my husband and children be faithful, then am I theirs. God is my Father, God is my Mother, God is my Sister, my Brother, my Kinsman; God is my Friend most faithful.' And so one day in the year 1558—the exact date is unknown—she was led out to a place called Southernhay, in Exeter, and there burnt to death. The priests worried her till the last; but all she would say was: 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence' (1 Cor. i. 27-29).

From many a farm-house in England, in the reign of Queen Mary, noble-minded men and women went forth to testify against Rome at the stake. Of these none were more courageous than Alice Driver, the wife of a farmer residing

at Grundisburgh, in Suffolk. She was only thirty-six years old when her troubles began. She happened to see the officers approaching her house to arrest her, and at once hid herself in a haystack, hoping thus to escape. The officers, however, thinking it likely to find her there, pushed pitchforks into the hay, and thus forced Alice to reveal herself. She was taken to Melton prison, and from there to Bury St. Edmunds, to await her trial at the forthcoming assizes.

Before her judges she compared Queen Mary to Jezebel, both being persecutors of God's people. For this offence the presiding judge cruelly ordered that both her ears should be cut off. This sentence was executed, and it is said that Alice thought herself happy that she was counted worthy thus to suffer for Christ's sake. After a time she was moved to Ipswich, where she was examined before the Chancellor of the Diocese. When she first came before him it cannot be said that she treated him with much courtesy. She 'came into his presence with a smiling countenance, which made the Chancellor very angry. 'Why, woman!' he exclaimed. 'Dost thou laugh us to scorn?' To which Alice replied, not very meekly, it must be admitted, 'Whether I do or no, I might well enough, to see what fools ye be!' Perhaps there was something humorous in their appearance which called forth this remark. The

Chancellor, whose name was Spencer, asked her what she thought about 'the sacrament of the altar?' To which she rèplied: 'In all my life I never heard nor read of any such sacrament in all the Scripture.'

A priest named Dr. Gascoine next asked her several questions about the real presence. He first of all wanted to know if Alice believed that God was almighty, and able to keep His promise; to which, of course, she answered in the affirmative.

Gascoine.—'Very well. Then He said to His disciples, "Take, eat, this is My body," *ergo*, it was His body. For He was able to perform that He spake, and God useth not to lie.'

Alice.—'I pray you, was it not bread that He gave them?'

Gascoine.—'No. It was His body.'

Alice.—'Then it was His body that they did eat over night?'

Gascoine.—'Yea. It was His body.'

Alice.—'What body was it, then, that was crucified next day?'

Gascoine.—'It was Christ's body.'

Alice.—'How could that be, when the disciples had eaten Him up over night, except He had two bodies, as by your argument He had? One they did eat over night, and another was crucified next day. Such a doctor! such a doctrine! Be you not ashamed to teach the people that Christ had

two bodies? In Luke xxii., "He took bread and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take," etc.; and "Do this in remembrance of Me." St. Paul also saith, 1 Cor. xi., "Do this in remembrance of Me; for as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shall show the Lord's death till He come"; and, therefore, I marvel ye blush not before all this people, to lie so manifestly as ye do.'

When Alice had finished this speech, the Chancellor lifted up his head from its cushion, and said to the jailer, 'Take her away.' 'Now,' replied Alice, 'ye be not able to resist the truth, ye command me to prison again. Well, the Lord in the end shall judge our cause, and to Him I leave it.' Next day Alice was examined again by the same man. At the close of the examination, she said:

'Have you no more to say? God be honoured! You be not able to resist the Spirit of God in me, a poor woman. I was an honest poor man's daughter, never brought up in the University, as you have been, but I have driven the plough before my father many a time (I thank God); yet notwithstanding, in the defence of God's truth, and in the cause of my Master Christ, by His grace I will set my foot against the foot of any of you all, in the maintenance and defence of the same, and if I had a

thousand lives, they should go for payment thereof.'

Well and wisely said, brave Alice! The priests were not able to answer the wisdom God had given her in the hour of her trial, but they were able to silence her by fire, and this they did at once. She was burnt to death at Ipswich, on November 4, 1558, in company with Alexander Gooch, who had been arrested with her.

The Sheriff that year was Sir Harry Dowell, a bigoted Papist, who tried to stop the martyrs from praying together at the stake. Gooch said to him: 'Take heed, Master Sheriff. If you forbid prayer, the vengeance of God hangeth over your head.' The executioner put an iron chain round Alice's neck. 'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'here is a goodly neckerchief; blessed be God for it.' A great number of those present, in spite of the Sheriff, rushed forward and shook the dying martyrs by the hand in token of sympathy; and soon after through fire they passed to the martyrs' eternal reward.

On June 22, 1557, ten Protestants, six of them men, and four of them women, were burnt to death, together in one fire, at Lewes, Sussex. The names of the women were Margery Morris (whose son James was burnt with her), of Heathfield; Ann Ashdon, of Rotherfield; Mary Groves, of Lewes; and Thomasina Wood, of Mayfield.

But very little or nothing is known about these godly and brave women, and were it not for Foxe their names even would have been forgotten long since. Seventeen Protestant martyrs were executed in all in Lewes.

In 1901, mainly through the efforts of Mr. Arthur Morris, an old resident in Lewes, a memorial to these glorious martyrs was erected near Lewes, on the South Downs. It was hoped that a suitable vacant site close by the spot where they were burnt, within the town, would have been granted by the authorities; but they refused to part with it. The site on which the Memorial stands was kindly granted as a gift by Mr. Isaac Vinall. The Memorial itself takes the form of an imposing obelisk, thirty-five feet high, and so situated as to be visible for many miles around. The following is the inscription:

'In Loving Memory of the undernamed seventeen Protestant Martyrs, who, for their faithful testimony to God's Truth, were, during the reign of Queen Mary, Burned to Death, in front of the Star Inn—near the Town Hall—Lewes.

'This Obelisk, provided by Public Subscriptions, was Erected A.D. 1901.

	DATES OF MARTYRDOM.
'Derick Carver, of Brighton	July 22, 1555.
Thomas Harland and John Oswald, both of Woodmancote.	June 6, 1556.
Thomas Avington and Thomas Reed, both of Ardingly.	

Thomas Wood (a Minister of the Gospel), of Lewes. Thomas Myles, of Hellingly.	About June 20, 1556.
Richard Woodman and George Stevens, both of Warbleton. Alexander Hosman, William Mainard, and Thomasina Wood, all of Mayfield. Margery Morris and James Morris (her son), both of Heathfield. Denis Burges, of Buxted. Ann Ashdon, of Rotherfield. Mary Groves, of Lewes.	June 22, 1557.

'"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death." (Rev. xii. 11, R.V.).'

CHAPTER V

WOMEN MARTYRS OF FRANCE

Ann Audebert—Massacre at Paris in 1557—Phillipa de Lunz—Massacre at Vassy—Massacre at Sens—Massacre at Toulouse—Another Massacre at Paris—Massacre at Orleans—Massacre of St. Bartholomew—A Widow and her Sister—200,000 Protestants Murdered in a Few Years—Edict of Nantes—Denounced by Pope Clement VIII.—The Dragonnades—Fearful Cruelty to Protestant Women—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—The Pope's Joy—Terrible Persecution of the Huguenots—Cruelties to Huguenot Women in Convents.

ANN AUDEBERT, the widow of an apothecary, in the year 1549 was on her way from France to Geneva, probably hoping thus to escape the persecutions then being endured by the Huguenots, when she was arrested on a charge of heresy. She was taken to Paris, where she was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be burnt alive in Orleans. There, upon September 28, she was taken from prison to the place of execution in a dung-cart, being thus, like the Apostle, accounted the 'offscouring of all things.'

Instead of being offended at this added indignity, she rejoiced greatly, as though she considered it an additional honour to be thus treated for Christ's sake. When the executioner placed the rope round her waist, to fasten her to the stake, she termed it her wedding girdle, wherewith she would be married to Christ. She was put to death on a Saturday, and referring to this, as she stood by the stake, she said: 'Upon a Saturday I was first married, and upon a Saturday I shall be married again.' She showed such marvellous courage at the last as to make the bystanders wonder greatly. She did not die in vain.

All through the reign of Henry II. the French Protestants suffered a series of almost uninterrupted persecutions. The only kind of piety the King knew was that of promoting the Romish faith in his country, at the cost of the followers of the Gospel. At times the persecutions were exceptionally severe. One of these outbursts of fury commenced immediately after the great national defeat at the battle of St. Quentin, which took place on August 27, 1557. The priests stirred up their deluded followers, by sermons from the pulpit, to outbreaks of violence against the Huguenots, attributing the national defeat to their neglect of avenging the Church against its enemies. On the evening of September 4,

1557, between three and four hundred Protestants, of both sexes, mostly of the upper classes, were quietly assembled together for Divine worship, and for partaking together of the Lord's Supper, in a private house in the suburbs of Paris, when suddenly the adjacent street was filled by a large and furious mob, bearing torches, and mostly armed with weapons of offence. Cries were heard on every hand, of 'Down with the Lutherans!' and soon an effort was made to force open the door and enter the building.

Fortunately, a few of the gentlemen within were wearing swords, as was at that time usual with those of high rank, and these courageously defended the outer door, while the ladies and old men fled out through the back door into the garden which opened into the fields. But the mob had guarded the back of the house as well as the front, and soon the hunted Protestants had to hasten back into the house for their lives. It was a terrible situation, for if the mob of infuriated Papists gained an entrance every one of the innocent three or four hundred would have been slaughtered in cold blood.

What was to be done? A few of the gentlemen decided that they would endeavour to fight their way through the crowd, for the purpose of obtaining help from the authorities of the city of Paris, leaving the others in the house to await

their return. Fortunately, these brave men succeeded in their object, though, unfortunately, one of their number was killed on the way.

All through that weary and anxious night the band left behind waited, not knowing, one moment from another, when their enemies would get in and put them to death. They passed the time in earnest prayer to God, and in reading consolatory passages of God's Holy Word. When the morning came the doors were forced open, but just as their danger was greatest, they heard the sound of a detachment of the city guards coming to their rescue.

But, alas! they only escaped from one peril to fall into another. The guard, instead of escorting them to their own homes, or to some place of safety within the city, took the whole party, men and women, off to prison, as so many criminals. The guard roughly dragged their victims through the street (while the mob cursed, insulted, and threw mud at them), and then placed them in the filthiest dungeons of the city, where only criminals of the darkest dye were confined. These were taken out, and the Protestants thrust in, where scarcely a ray of daylight could penetrate, and where they were so crowded that they could neither sit nor lie down. Every effort was made by their friends to save them, and a petition was presented to the King

on their behalf; but he coldly threw it on one side. There was no pity in his hard heart for any man or woman who dared to differ from the cruel Church of Rome. The prisoners were brought to trial, and every one of them was sentenced to death.

When the news of their impending fate reached John Calvin, he made every exertion to secure the release of as many as possible, and persuaded the Cantons of Berne, and Zurich, and the German Protestant Princes to intercede with the King of France for those condemned to die. Fortunately, political reasons induced the King to yield to these representations to a certain extent. The younger prisoners were transferred to monasteries, while some obtained a free pardon, on condition that they signed an ambiguous confession of faith. But they did not all escape thus. Many of them were tortured most cruelly, and then put to death. It is stated by White, in his invaluable *History of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew*, that when the Pope, Paul IV., heard that some of these had escaped the penalty of death, he complained bitterly of this moderation!

Amongst those who assembled in that house in the Paris suburbs, for the worship of God, was a young lady of high rank and great beauty, named Phillipa de Lunz. Although only twenty-one years of age when arrested, she was already

a widow. Her husband, like herself, was a Huguenot, and an elder of the Church ; but he had died only four months before her arrest. She was kept in prison for more than a year, and was then led out to die for the faith of Christ crucified. While in prison many prominent Romanists visited her, but failed to move her from her steadfastness. She told one of her judges who came to see her that she had learned the faith she confessed in the Word of God, and in that faith she was determined to live and die. She was asked, if the body of Christ were not in the sacrament ? to which her powerful reply was : ' How is it possible that it should be the body of Christ, to whom all power is given, and who is exalted above all heavens, when we see the mice and rats, apes and monkeys, play with it, and tear it to pieces ? '

It was charged against her that when her husband was dying, she sent for no priest to attend him ; and that it was unknown where he was buried. There had been an infant born of the marriage ; but it had not been taken to the priests to be baptised, though, as a matter of fact, it had been baptised in accordance with the custom of the Huguenots. Phillipa was rich, and there were those who, to gain possession of her wealth, urged that her life should not be spared.

On September 27, 1558, Phillipa de Lunz, with two others, was led out to die a martyr's death. On the way to the place of execution a wooden cross was pressed on her for acceptance; but she refused to carry it, although it was urged against her that Christ commanded every one to bear his cross. Her answer was: 'My Lords, you make me in very deed to bear my cross, condemning me unjustly, and putting me to death in the quarrel of my Lord Jesus Christ, who willeth us to bear our cross—but no such cross as you speak of.' A priest came and invited her to confess to him before she died; but she told him most emphatically that she had already confessed to God, and obtained His absolution; and she had found no other kind of absolution in the Scriptures. All around her a yelling mob of the vilest rabble of Paris had gathered, crying aloud for her blood, and it is said that the King himself was also present, to witness the murder of the saints of God. It was a trying time for that brave young girl, but the grace and strength of Jesus were made perfect in her weakness, and she submitted to all that followed without flinching. Until the morning of her execution she had worn a widow's dress, but then she put on a bride's dress of joy; for, she said, she was now going to her marriage with her Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ.

To add to her sufferings she was required to witness the burning alive of her two companions in martyrdom. Their tongues had been cut out to prevent them praying aloud, or exhorting the people. The inhuman butchers did not spare even gentle Phillipa this horrible punishment. The executioner ordered her to put out her tongue, and she did it at once. The readiness with which she complied surprised even the executioner. 'Come,' he exclaimed, 'that's well! But are you not afraid?' 'As I do not fear for my body, why should I fear for my tongue?' was the Christian martyr's heroic reply.

They were the last words she ever uttered; the next moment her tongue lay at her feet. One act of mercy was extended to her; she was strangled first, and burnt afterwards.

The persecution of the Huguenots continued, with brief intervals, during many years after the death of Phillipa de Lunz. Baird mentions that, in the year 1561, no fewer than twenty cities had witnessed the slaughter of Protestants by the infuriated rabble. Amongst those put to death were a great many women, whose names are now forgotten. But for all this the truth spread rapidly, and the number of Protestants quickly multiplied. At Vassy alone, on Christmas Day, no fewer than nine hundred Huguenots partook of the Lord's Supper, in accordance with the

Reformed rite. On the first day of the following March, the Duke of Guise, with about two hundred armed retainers, arrived in Vassy. He first went to hear mass, with his followers; but a few of the armed men went to the Huguenot place of worship, where, it being Sunday, no fewer than twelve hundred Protestants were quietly listening to the preacher. One of the followers of Guise called out aloud, '*Mort Dieu*, they must all be killed.' This exclamation threw the congregation into confusion. Knowing that the Duke of Guise and his soldiers were in the town, they thought it a necessary measure of self-defence to barricade the doors as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately they were too late. The Duke himself had, with his soldiers, forced his way into the church, and then followed a scene of horror. Old and young, men, women, and children, were fired on without pity, or killed by the sword. Some of the Huguenots tried to get out on the roof and from thence to the next houses, but as soon as they were seen they were shot down by men placed in the streets for that purpose. After an hour and a half of this cruel butchery, Guise called off his soldiers, and then from fifty to sixty dead and dying women were found in the building, and about one hundred more dangerously wounded. Of the latter class forty-eight died within a month.

Later on in the same year, at, it is said, the instigation of a certain Cardinal, the Roman Catholics of Sens murdered one hundred Huguenot men and women in cold blood, without any provocation whatever, and threw their dead bodies into the river Yonne. One of these was a gentlewoman, wife of a medical man. Her breasts were cut off in the presence of her two daughters, and after having otherwise ill-used her in the most brutal manner, they threw her alive into the river, where she was drowned. These events led to the first Civil War, for the Protestants, having by this time become numerous and strong, defended themselves bravely against the attempted massacres of the Papists.

In Toulouse the Protestants had secured a small company of soldiers to defend them against the attack of their enemies, which they hourly expected. The Roman Catholics demanded the surrender of the building in which the Huguenots had gathered together, and induced them to consent by promises that they would be allowed to depart in safety. No sooner had they yielded than the Romanists most treacherously involved them in a horrible carnage. Three thousand men and women were killed while making their escape from the city. Within three months from this event, two hundred Protestants were publicly executed. 'Such,' says Baird, writing

in 1880, 'were the deeds which the Roman Catholics of Southern France have up to our times commemorated by centenary celebrations; such the pious achievements for which Blaise de Montluc received from Pope Pius IV. the most lavish praise as a zealous defender of the Catholic faith.'

In 1862, Monseigneur Desprez, Archbishop of Toulouse, announced to his flock the forthcoming Tercentenary of the Massacre of Toulouse. 'The Catholic Church,' he wrote to them, 'always makes it a duty to recall, in the succession of ages, the most remarkable events in its history—particularly those which belong to it in a special manner. It is thus that we are going to celebrate this year the Jubilee commemorative of *a glorious act* accomplished among you three hundred years ago.' The Archbishop went on to hold up to the admiration of his people the Centenary celebration of 1762, 'at which were present all the persons of distinction—the Religious Orders, the officiating minister under his canopy, the red robes, and the Members of Parliament pressing behind the University, the Seneschal, the *bourgeoisie*, and finally a company of soldiers.'

Happily the French Government did not allow the Archbishop of Toulouse to have everything his own way on this occasion. It issued an order forbidding the proposed procession,

and all outdoor solemnities ; and manifested its dislike of the celebrations as a whole by declaring 'the celebration of a Jubilee of the 16th to the 23rd of May next, enjoined by the Archbishop of Toulouse, to be nothing less than the commemoration of a mournful and bloody episode of our ancient religious discords.'

During the month of June, 1562, encouraged by the Parliament, the Roman Catholic populace of Paris, within two or three days, attacked, robbed, and murdered sixty men and women, whom they threw into the river. After the peace at the end of the second Civil War, in 1568, the murder of Protestant men and women was quite a common event in many parts of France. Baird tells us that in consequence of the action of the 'Confraternities of the Holy Ghost,' and other confraternities, established especially by the Jesuits, 'Murder held high carnival wherever the Protestants were not so numerous as to be able to stand on the defensive. The victims were of every rank and station, from the obscure peasant to the distinguished Cipierre, son of the Count de Tende, and a relative of the Duke of Savoy, the orders for whose assassination were confidently believed to have issued from the Court. . . . The aggregate of homicides committed within the brief space of this so-called peace was enormous. Jean de Serres and Agrippa

d'Aubigné may possibly go somewhat beyond the mark when they state that the number of victims in three months—April, May, and June, 1568—was over ten thousand.'

What was the proportion of Protestant women murdered during these three months there is no means of ascertaining, but there can be little doubt that it was very large. Since most, if not all, of these died merely because they were Protestants, it is only just that they should be numbered amongst the Women Martyrs of the Reformation.

On August 21, 1569, there was another fearful massacre of Protestant men and women in Orleans. The Lieutenant-General placed every Protestant in the city in prison. The Romanists, incited by the priests, broke into the prison, and every Huguenot man, woman, and child was murdered. One part of the prison was too strong for the mob to break through, and therefore they collected all the wood they could find in the neighbourhood, and set the building on fire. The parents of the children within, seeing a number of their acquaintances in the crowd outside, threw out to them their infant children, hoping that they would at least save the lives of the innocent babes. But what must have been their feelings when they saw their infants received on the points of spikes, and murdered before their eyes!

In all, two hundred and eighty Protestants were slain on this occasion.

In the same year, during the third Civil War, Pope Pius V. (now a canonised saint !) wrote to the King of France a letter urging him not to give up the contest until he had exterminated the Protestants: 'The more vigorously and diligently,' he wrote, 'must you make use of the present victory to pursue and destroy the remnants of the enemy, and wholly tear up, not only the roots of an evil so great, and which had gathered to itself such strength, but even the very fibres of the roots. Unless they be *thoroughly extirpated*, they will again sprout and grow up, where your Majesty least expects it.' To the Queen-Mother of France, the Pope wrote: 'Under no circumstances, and from no consideration, ought the enemies of God to be spared. If your Majesty shall continue, as heretofore, to seek with right purpose of mind, and a simple heart, the honour of Almighty God, and shall assail the foes of the Catholic religion openly and freely *even to extermination*, be well assured that the Divine assistance will never fail, and that still greater victories will be prepared by God for you, and for the King your son, until, *when all shall have been destroyed*, the pristine worship of the Catholic religion shall have been restored to that most illustrious realm.'

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW. IN THE ENGLISH EMBASSY, AUGUST 25, 1572.

The results of Papal exhortations to exterminate every Protestant were markedly seen in the terrible Massacre of St. Bartholomew, in 1572. The number of victims in Paris alone has been variously estimated. Baird, the latest Protestant historian of the Huguenots, thinks they were probably between four thousand and five thousand of both sexes, and every age and condition. It is not for me to give here a detailed history of that fearful crime, which filled the Protestant world with horror. The best account is that given by Mr. Henry White, in his invaluable book entitled *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew*. He estimates the number of victims at six thousand. The military director of this awful crime, the Maréchal Tavannes, rode through the streets with dripping sword, crying out: 'Kill! kill! blood-letting is as good in August as in May.' That man, years after, while on his deathbed, made a confession of sins to a priest, and when reminded that he did not mention St. Bartholomew's Day, observed: 'I look upon that as a meritorious action, which ought to atone for all the sins of my life.' During this awful massacre the Huguenot women suffered every kind of indignity, before being actually put to death. One woman was even betrayed by her own daughter. Frances Baillet, wife of the Queen's goldsmith, saw her husband and son murdered,

and then leaped out of a window. By doing so she broke both her legs. She was dragged through the streets by the hair, and as she happened to be wearing gold bracelets, both her hands were chopped off, to get at them. Her inhuman torturers left her at the door of a cook-shop, the owner of which, because he was annoyed by her groans, ran a spit into her body, and left her there to die. Baird states that 'Matron and maiden alike welcomed as merciful the blow that liberated them from an existence now rendered insupportable.'

When the news of the St. Bartholomew Massacre reached Rome, the Pope (Gregory XIII.) was so overjoyed that he went in procession to St. Peter's, to thank God for the overthrow of the Huguenots. Modern Roman Catholics assert that he did not know at the time the full particulars of what had taken place; but if this were so—which is more than doubtful—it would have made no difference to his rejoicing, for, long after the time when he must have known every detail of the crime, he struck a medal in honour of the event, and employed Vasari to paint on the walls of the Vatican three pictures representing an event which had afforded him such joy.

The massacre in Paris was followed by others in the provinces, as the result of orders sent out by the King and others. At Meaux twenty-five women were murdered in cold blood, while others

were so severely beaten that they died in a few days. The Papists were dragging to mass one poor woman, the wife of Nicholas, a cap-maker, when she uttered a severe condemnation of that service. This so enraged her conductors that, being at that moment over a bridge, they stabbed her, and threw her body over into the river. After this, two hundred more of the Huguenot residents were arrested. A man named Casset was in command of the band of murderers. Late in the day, with a pistol in each hand, he mounted the steps of the prison courtyard, and called out the names of the arrested Protestants. As each one appeared, he was murdered. The task was long, and had to be adjourned until after the assassins had eaten their suppers. Some of the victims were kept until next day, by the end of which every one of the prisoners had been slain. At Orleans, letters were received from a priest named Arnauld Sorbin, one of the Court preachers, urging the inhabitants to follow the example of Paris. As a consequence, a general butchery of Protestants began on the Tuesday night after the Paris crime, and was continued without intermission until the following Saturday. As the Protestants were being murdered, the Romanists scoffingly called out: 'Where is your God?' 'Where are your prayers and your Psalms?' 'Where is the God they invoke so much? Let

Him save, if He can.' The murderers themselves afterwards boasted that they had slain twelve hundred men, one hundred and fifty women, and a large number of children under nine years old.

For fifteen days after the principal massacre at Paris the murderous work went on. At Lyons, at least eight hundred Protestants, men and women, were slain. At Rouen, the Romanists, says Baird, 'burst into the houses, and nearly every atrocity which history is compelled at any time reluctantly to chronicle was perpetrated on unresisting men, on tender women, on unoffending children. Not less than five hundred persons, and perhaps more, perished in a butchery whose details I gladly pass over in silence.' At Toulouse, about two hundred men and women were murdered; and at Bordeaux, two hundred and fifty. In some towns the Roman Catholic authorities, to their credit be it recorded, refused to carry out the King's cruel orders, and spared the lives of the Protestants.

The next instance of female martyrdom in France for the Protestant cause which I have to record, took place in 1588, during the reign of Henry III. In order that he might please the 'Holy League,' which had been mainly organised by the Jesuits for the extermination of the Huguenots throughout the whole of France, the

King visited two Protestant women then in prison, solely on the charge of being obstinate heretics. The elder of these was the widow of Jean Sureau, of Montargis, and the mother of three very young children. The other was her unmarried sister. The King visited them, quite expecting to bring them back to the Church of Rome. He soon found that his hopes were in vain. He talked to them for a long time, but could not move them. He then promised them their immediate freedom if they would but consent to go to mass. They told him that their consciences would not allow them to accept his offer. Thereupon the King grew angry. 'I see,' he said, 'very well how the case stands; you are obstinate women who will be converted only by means of fire.' Two priests whom he had brought with him afterwards tried for a whole hour to persuade them to give up their Protestant faith; but the faithful women quoted against them the written Word of God, and with such success that the priests withdrew, defeated. At the same time the famous Bernard Palissy, the Potter, was also in prison as a Protestant, where he remained several years until his death. The King visited him also in prison.

'My good fellow,' he said to him, 'for forty-five years you have been in the service of the Queen, my mother, and in mine, and we have endured

your living in your religion through fires and massacres. But now I am so hard pressed by the Guises and my people, that I have been compelled, despite my own wishes, to throw you and these two poor women into prison. They will be burned, and you also, if you do not suffer yourself to be converted.'

But Palissy was not the kind of man to yield, even to the blandishments of a king. Fearlessly he replied :

'Sire, Count Maulevrier came yesterday, and, in your name, promised the two sisters their lives on the most degrading condition. They answered that they would be martyrs for their own honour, as well as for the honour of God. You have told me several times that you pitied me, but it is I who pity you, who have uttered these words, "I am compelled." That was not speaking like a King. These girls and I, who have a portion in the kingdom of heaven, will teach you this royal speech, that neither the Guisards nor all your people, nor you yourself, can ever constrain a Potter to bow the knee before images.'

The sisters were kept in prison for five months longer, and then, by sentence of the Provost, confirmed by the Parliament of Paris, it was ordered that they should first be hanged on the gallows until dead, and that then their bodies should be consigned to the flames. On June 28,

1588, the sentence was carried out. The two sisters bore themselves bravely in their testimony against Popery, refused to recant, and continued to exhort the people, until gags were placed in their mouths. The younger sister died while hanging on the gallows; but then the mob broke through the barriers, and, taking the elder sister down before she was dead, threw her alive into the fire, where she was quickly consumed.

The Rev. John Quick, in his *Synodicon: The Acts and Decrees of the National Synods of the Reformed Churches of France*, published in two folio volumes, in 1692, writes: 'I remember the author of *Le Cabinet du Roy*, a book printed in the year 1581, and dedicated to Henry III., makes a computation of their Martyrs to have been in a very few years, at least above 200,000 cut off for the Gospel, and he makes his account thus: "Allow me," saith he, "but an hundred Martyrs to every Church, and you have the sum; and yet it is as clear as the sun at noonday, that the sum is vastly more. For it is a truth incontestable that there have been cut off by the sword and massacres for religion—from the Church of Caen above 15,000, or 16,000; from the Church of Alençon, 5,000; from the Church of Paris, 13,000; from the Church of Rheims, 12,000; from the Church of Troye, 12,000; from the Church of Sens, 9,000; from the Church of

Orleans, 8,000; from the Church of Angiers, 7,500; from the Church of Poictiers, 12,000 persons." '

The sufferings of the Huguenots were, at length, greatly mitigated by the Edict of Nantes, issued by Henry IV. in 1598. It granted to the Protestants liberty to live anywhere in the royal dominions, without being subject to inquiry as to their religion, or constrained to do anything contrary to their consciences. A considerable amount of liberty of public worship was also granted to them; many of the Protestant noblemen were permitted to have religious services in their residences whenever they liked, and these were open to all comers. The children of Huguenots were to be admitted to all universities, colleges, and schools throughout France; and, in places where their worship was authorised, Huguenots were to be allowed to erect schools of their own. It was also ordered that Protestants should be eligible to fill all public positions, dignities, offices, and charges.

This act of common justice to the best men of France was violently opposed by the bishops and clergy. When the news that the Edict of Nantes had been registered by the Parliament of Paris reached the Pope, Clement VIII., he was furious. He summoned the French envoys to his presence, and said to them:

'I am the most grieved and disconsolate person

in the world, because of the Edict which the King of France has made in favour of the heretics, and to the prejudice of the Catholic religion. This Edict has at last passed, and has been published, contrary to the hope I had always entertained since it was spoken of. I had always believed that the King made it merely to satisfy the Huguenots in appearance, and that he would have been very glad to have the clergy oppose it, and Parliament refuse to pass it, in order to use this excuse subsequently with the Huguenots. Now I see quite the opposite of what I had expected of the King. First, I see *an Edict the most accursed that can be imagined, whereby liberty of conscience is granted to every one, which is the worst thing in the world.* In addition to this, the worship of that damnable sect is permitted throughout the whole kingdom.'

It was nearly ninety years after the passing of the Edict of Nantes before the persecution of the Huguenots assumed again the awful form of that of the sixteenth century. As early as the year 1660 efforts were made by the Roman Catholics to undermine the Edict, and a great deal of suffering was the immediate result. Louis XIV. was, at that time, King of France, and he had been all his life under the influence of the Jesuits, the leading foes of religious liberty for Protestants. In 1683 a young lawyer of Montelimar, named

Daniel Chamiel, was broken alive on the wheel, for the sole offence of being a Protestant. To add to his trouble, this horrible torture was perpetrated in the street where his mother lived, and opposite to her house. She seems to have been present at his terrible execution, in which all his bones were broken to pieces before he died. When urged by her friends that she should use her influence with her son to induce him to recant, this noble-minded heroine replied: 'I have yet three children, whom I shall cheerfully give up, if they be called to die for religion's sake.' In Torique a poor countrywoman named Frances Aubin declared that her resolution to adhere to the Protestant religion was unchangeable; whereupon they squeezed her fingers to pieces with iron screws, and then hung her up by her armpits, and while there forced her to draw in through her nostrils tobacco and brimstone! Not content with these tortures, they tied her legs under a horse, who drew her upon burning faggots, after which they finally threw her into a ditch. Another woman, named Fountayne, of the same place, was also hung up by her arms and smoked with tobacco, after which they burnt her fingers with fire and threw her into a dungeon, where she died of cold and hunger.

The principal method at first relied on for

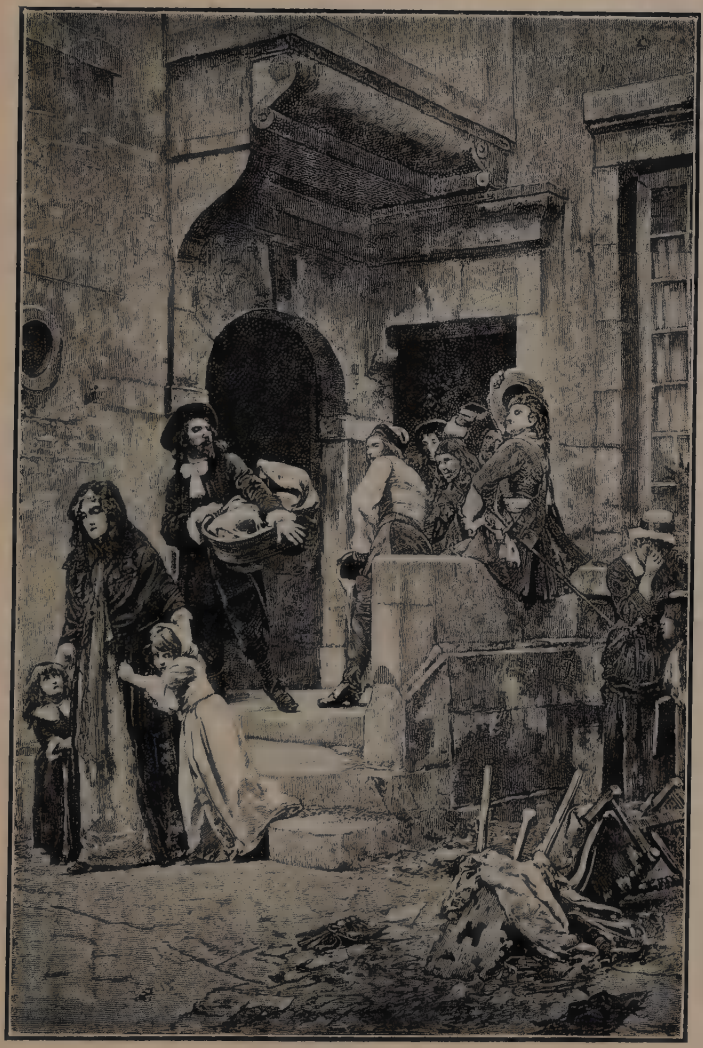
persecuting the Protestants was that known as the 'Dragonnades.' Soldiers were quartered on the houses occupied by Huguenots, who were compelled to find them not merely shelter, but everything else they demanded, either for themselves or the horses they brought with them. Every possible outrage was committed by these troopers, who tortured men and women whenever they pleased. Thumbscrews were used for the Protestant men, while women were frequently hung for hours from the roofs of their houses, or else thrown upon heaps of lighted faggots, and sometimes even had their feet roasted before a blazing fire. All this was done for the purpose of compelling these unfortunate people to go to mass. Need we wonder at learning that these methods of 'converting' Protestants to the Church of Rome had some success?

In the city of Montauban, Samuel de Peschels, a Huguenot gentleman, was, with his wife and family, bitterly persecuted. He subsequently wrote an account of the way in which the soldiers pillaged his house. 'They burst all the doors,' he tells us, 'broke open the chests and closets, preferring to plunder my property in this brutal fashion, rather than accept the keys which my wife and I offered and begged them to use. They converted into stables my barns full of wheat and flour, which they savagely made their horses

tread under foot. They treated in like manner the bread destined for the nourishment of my little children, without our being able to stop their brutal fury. I was put out of the house with my wife, who was on the eve of her confinement, and with our four little children. We were allowed to take with us only a cradle, and a little linen for the child whose birth was expected. The street being full of people who rejoiced at seeing us thus plundered, we were for a few moments unable to go beyond the door, and the soldiers emptied upon us from the windows buckets of water, the better to divert themselves at our sad situation.'

Everything that Samuel de Peschels owned was taken from him by force; his family was utterly ruined. Yet in the midst of the ruin he could say: 'God be praised for all His favours, especially for giving us courage to prefer the loyalty which we owe to Him above all earthly goods. The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' Soon after he was robbed of his children, thrown into prison, and eventually transported as a slave to America. Fortunately he escaped, and came to England. He and his wife remained faithful to God and His truth to the end of their lives.

'So then,' writes Laval of this period, 'the condition of the Reformed in France could not



An Episode of the Dragonnades.

be more dismal than it was in the year 1685. They were persecuted in their births, and in their lives, and at the point of their deaths, and after their deaths. They were forced to be sprinkled as soon as they were born by midwives or men-midwives, and thereby to receive the sign of superstition. They were persecuted and oppressed during their lives, in their goods, honour, conscience, bodies, and in their children. In their agonies, they were left to the furious zeal of priests and monks, who tormented them in several ways, to force them mortally to wound their conscience. After their death their corpses were inhumanly exposed to shame, without any regard to age, sex, or quality. The sacredness of their graves (respected even by Pagans) was violated with a fury suitable to a Popish zeal. These dismal circumstances, these open violations, called loudly for the assistance of the Protestant Powers. But England was then the only Power capable of obtaining a redress for us, and James II. sat at that time on the British throne.'

Quick, in his *Synodicon*, draws an even more fearful picture of the sufferings of Protestant men and women at this time. He writes :

'Amidst a thousand hideous cries and blasphemies they hung up men and women by the hair, or feet, upon the roofs of the chambers or hooks of the chimneys, and smoked them with

wisps of wet hay, till they were no longer able to bear it; and when they had taken them down, if they would not sign an abjuration of their pretended heresies, they then trussed them up again immediately. Some they threw into great fires, kindled on purpose, and would not take them out until they were half roasted. They tied ropes under their arms, and plunged them again and again into deep wells, from whence they would not draw them till they had promised to change their religion. They bound them as criminals are when they be put to the rack, and in that posture putting a funnel into their mouths, they poured wine down their throats till the fumes had deprived them of their reason, and they had in that condition made them consent to become Catholics. Some they stripped stark naked, and after they had offered them a thousand indignities, they stuck them with pins from head to foot. They cut them with penknives, tore them by the noses with red-hot pincers, and dragged them about the rooms until they promised to become Roman Catholics, or until the doleful outcries of these poor tormented creatures, calling upon God for mercy, constrained them to let them go. They beat them with staves, and dragged them, all bruised, to the Popish Churches, where their enforced presence was reputed for an abjuration. They kept them waking for seven or

eight days together, relieving one another by turns, that they might not get a wink of sleep or rest. In case they began to nod, they threw buckets of water in their faces, or, holding kettles over their heads, they beat on them with such a continual noise that these poor wretches lost their reason.

'If they found any sick, who kept their beds, men or women, be it of fevers or other diseases, they were so cruel as to beat up an alarm with twelve drums about their beds, for a whole week together, without intermission, till they had promised to change.'

These cases are but specimens of what went on everywhere in the time of the dreaded Dragonnades. It is true that the people who at first suffered at the hands of the soldiers were not put to death at the moment; yet none the less were they martyrs in spirit, willing to suffer, not only excruciating agonies, but even the loss of their lives, rather than deny their Saviour, and it is for this reason that a reference to their sufferings rightly finds a place in these pages.

At length, a final blow at the existence of Protestantism in France was struck when Louis XIV., on October 17, 1685, affixed his signature to the document which ever since has been known as the Revocation of the Edict of

Nantes. Every concession which had been made to the Protestants by the Edict of Nantes was 'suppressed and revoked'; and therefore all the places of worship occupied by those of the 'Pretended Reformed Religion' were to 'be demolished without delay,' in every part of the kingdom. The Protestants were forbidden 'to meet any more for the exercise of the said religion in any place or private house under any pretext whatever.' All Protestant ministers 'who do not choose to become converts and to embrace the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion,' must leave the kingdom within fifteen days, under penalty of being sent to the galleys; but if any of them became Roman Catholics they should enjoy, during their lives, an annuity of one-third greater than they had as ministers, half of which annuity should be continued to their widows. Moreover, they should be exempt from paying taxes. All private schools for the instruction of Huguenot children were closed. Henceforth, all the children of Protestants must be baptised by Roman Catholic priests only, under a fine of five hundred livres, and the children themselves must be brought up in the Roman Catholic religion. By the tenth article of this Edict, Protestants were forbidden to leave the country, under penalty, for men, of being sent to the galleys, and for women, of 'confiscation of body and goods.'

When Henry IV., in 1598, issued the Edict of Nantes, giving liberty of conscience and worship to the French Protestants, Pope Clement VIII., as we have seen, went wild with rage ; but when his successor, Innocent XI., heard of its Revocation, he showed his great joy in several ways. A special *Te Deum* was offered to Almighty God, and for three whole days the city of Rome was illuminated. Six weeks after the Revocation was signed, the Pope issued a Brief, addressed to Louis XIV., in which he said :

'Since above all the rest of those illustrious proofs which do abundantly declare the natural inbred piety of your Majesty, that noble zeal (and worthy the Most Christian King) is most conspicuous, with which, being ardently inflamed, you have wholly abrogated all those Constitutions that were favourable to the heretics of your Kingdom, and by most wise Decrees set forth have excellently provided for the propagation of the orthodox belief, as our beloved son and your Ambassador with us, the noble Duke de Estrées, hath declared unto us. We thought it was incumbent on us most largely to commend that excellent piety of yours by the remarkable and lasting testimony of these our letters, and to congratulate your Majesty on that accession of immortal commendation which you have added to your other great exploits by so illustrious an

action of this kind. The Catholic Church shall most assuredly record in her sacred annals a work of such devotion to her, and celebrate your name with never-dying praises. But above all, you may most deservedly promise to yourself an ample retribution from the Divine goodness for this most excellent undertaking, and may rest assured that we shall never cease to pour forth our most earnest prayers to that Divine goodness for this intent and purpose.'

Strengthened and encouraged by this Pontifical blessing, the work of intolerance made rapid progress. The archbishops and bishops of France re-echoed the Pope's blessing on the operations of the Dragonnades, which consequently became more active and cruel than ever. The celebrated Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, in a sermon, declared that they ought now to say to the King of France : ' You have confirmed the faith ; you have exterminated the heretics ; this is the worthy achievement of your reign, it is its true characteristic. In consequence of you, heresy no longer exists. God alone was able to accomplish this wonder. King of Heaven, preserve the King of the earth ! This is the prayer of the Churches ; this is the prayer of the Bishops.'

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes led to the emigration of vast numbers of Huguenots, a large proportion of whom settled down in England.

That emigration proved a lasting benefit to English industry. The French authorities did everything possible to prevent the Huguenots leaving their country; but, for all this, many thousands succeeded in escaping. The sufferings of women and children who tried to emigrate were very severe. It was no unusual thing for a woman to be conveyed on board a ship inside a barrel, and children also, it being thought better to suffer any inconvenience rather than remain in their native land. A royal order was issued that before any vessel was allowed to sail for a foreign port, the hold should be fumigated with deadly gas, in order that any Huguenot hidden on board might thus be suffocated.

As to the Huguenot women who remained in France, if they refused to become Roman Catholics, they were consigned to convents, where they suffered a prolonged martyrdom, until death released them from their sufferings. One of these poor women, named Blanche Gamond, wrote an account of her sufferings. She was first of all cast into the dungeons of Grenoble, from which she was removed to the Hospital General of Valence, the governor of which was a man named Herapine, better known as 'La Rapine.' The hospital was a conventual institution, largely used as a prison for Huguenot women. On the evening of her arrival in this place, Blanche

refused to go to the chapel, whereupon, under the direction of a nun called Sister Marie, three or four women dragged her into it by main force, with many blows and kicks: 'Beggar, dog of a Huguenot, you will not go to church!' was the exclamation of the nun as Blanche was hurried along.

The next day Blanche, and other Protestant women who had also refused to go to church, were brought before the terrible governor. And this is what he said to them:

'You are stubborn, rebels against the King and against God; but you will have to change, or you will die under the blows. I shall bring you over, cursed race of vipers, by means of floggings. For I know my business by rote. I am fifty-six years old. I shall make you obey, knaves, better than any other man in the kingdom. The hospital is not made for you; but you are here to obey the orders of the hospital, and this is the command of my Lord the Bishop of Valence. You shall be the filth and offscouring of the hospital. You shall sweep from morning till night, and, if you fail, you shall have a hundred blows with a stick. After that, I shall see that you are thrust into a dungeon, where I shall make you die of hunger. But in order that you may linger the more, you shall have a little bread and water, and it is impossible that you should be

able to stand the blows you shall receive. In the end you will be dead in thirty or forty days at most; we know it, for we have tried the experiment. After all that, you will be cast into the common sewer; the King will be rid of a bad subject. There will be a dead dog, wretched in this life, damned in the next. You may count upon it, dogs, beggars, this is your portion.'

The governor's actions were as cruel as his words. The Roman Catholic girls of the hospital scourged poor Blanche again and again; but all in vain. She bore every cruelty with true Christian meekness, but she would not give way. Another Huguenot in the same convent prison was a young lady of gentle birth, named De la Farelle. To her the governor said: 'Mademoiselle, I am astonished that you should be able to endure so many hardships.' To which her brave and noble reply was: 'I suffer nothing, it is nothing; Jesus Christ suffered much more for me.' This brutal governor used himself to take a cane in his hands and beat the helpless Protestant ladies in his charge, on the back, arms, legs, and face, until they could not move one foot before the other, nor even carry their hands to their mouths! He varied his torments by plunging them, several times a day, in a pit of mud and fetid water, from which he only drew them out when they had become unconscious.

It is said that some of these convent prisons for Huguenot women were even worse than the Hospital General of Valence.

But outside the convent walls the sufferings of Huguenot women fully prove that they possessed the true martyr spirit, since each of them might have escaped by abjuring her faith. They suffered terribly from the Dragonnades. Louvois, the Minister of War, wrote to Foucault, who was the chief commandant of the soldiers, with reference to the holding of Protestant meetings : ' If it happen again to be possible to fall upon such gatherings, let orders be given to the dragoons to kill the greatest part of the Protestants that can be overtaken, *without sparing the women*, to the end that this may intimidate them, and prevent others from falling into a similar fault.' He also ordered that some of the women arrested at these meetings for religious worship should be flogged. The cruellest outrages were committed by these dragoons. At Uzes they took three hundred women, and stabbed every one of them in their sides and breasts, besides killing thirty more outright. It would be impossible to record here one hundredth part of the outrages they committed on defenceless females, but a few instances illustrating their sufferings may be given.

At Marans, in Aunix, Dame Mary Blavon,

widow of the Sieur du Baugné Gendron, suffered greatly at the hands of the dragoons quartered in her house. They forced her into an armchair close to the fireplace, and, after lighting a large pan of charcoal close to her, they applied red-hot irons to her legs. Two Capuchin monks stood by while this torture was being applied, and when a poor Roman Catholic woman who was present, moved by pity for the sufferer, tried to put out the fire, they threatened to throw her into it if she did not leave it alone.

At Moncoutant, in Lower Poitou, the dragoons were employed in applying fire to the feet of an artisan, when his daughter, about seventeen or eighteen years of age, urged him to call on Jesus for help, and to remain firm in his Protestant faith. This so angered the dragoons, that they forcibly took off her stockings, rubbed her feet and legs over with butter and other grease, soaked her stockings in the same material, and then, after compelling her to put them on again, they set them on fire, burning her feet to the bones. But for all this neither she nor her father would give way.

Many women were driven mad by the persecutions they endured. One of the most effectual means adopted to produce such a result, was that of depriving their victims of sleep. The wife of Daniel Milaud, of Chatellerault, was tormented

in this way. She was kept awake for several days and nights by beating kettles over her head, without intermission, until at last her reason gave way. A Madame Tanon, of Trieves, in Dauphine, a widow, was tormented in the same manner ; but the instrument used to keep her awake was a drum tied round her neck, which they beat day and night, kicking her at intervals, and threatening to turn her out naked into the streets. She went mad, and remained mad until her dying day.

Madame Belly, wife of a Protestant minister, was brought into trouble by her Popish brother. She was imprisoned at Rennes, and while she was there her unnatural brother wrote to the Bishop and the Jesuits, begging them to use every possible means, except outrage, to force her to recant. By the Bishop's orders she was placed on the rack, where she was stretched by eight men, who relieved each other in turns. While on the rack they forced her to swallow vast quantities of brandy, until she lost her senses for a time. After this they compelled her to dance on a table for three hours at a time, until she fainted away. These tortures were kept up, day and night, for eight days. But as she would not even yet give up her Saviour, or deny His faith, they deprived her of sleep for six more days and nights. At last they shut her up in a nunnery, from which she eventually escaped to

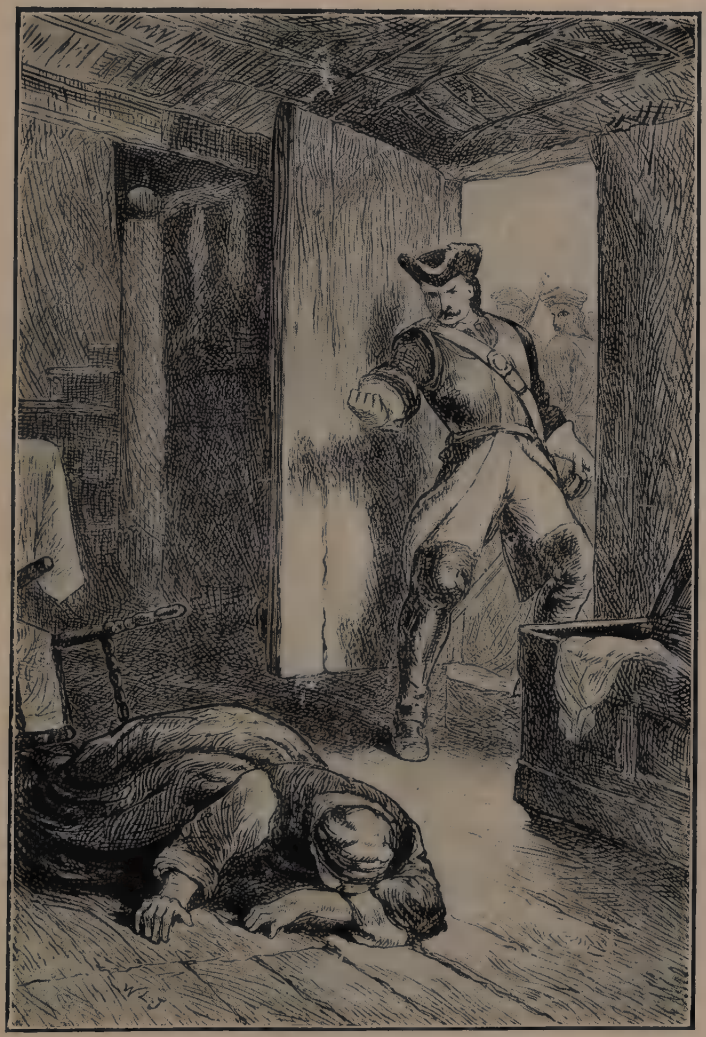
Guernsey, where she happily met with her husband again.

The Rev. Stephen A. Laval, in his *History of the Reformed Churches in France*, referring to the work of the dragoons, says: 'I daresay that, by these means, they have massacred, at several times and places, from the year 1685 to the year 1715, when Louis XIV. died, above eight thousand people in that manner'; and he adds that 'all those who suffered death were left to their choice to redeem their life and liberty at the cost of their conscience, if they would but renounce their religion; but they stood immovable, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for they had respect unto the recompense of the reward.'

And, after all, what did France gain by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, with the cruel persecutions which followed? Let the Duke of St. Simon, a Roman Catholic who lived at the time, answer. He wrote:

'The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, without the slightest pretext or the least necessity, as well as the various declarations, or rather proscriptions, that followed, were the fruits of that horrible plot which depopulated a fourth part of the kingdom, ruined its trade, enfeebled it in every quarter, gave it over for so long a time to open and avowed pillage at the hands of the

dragoons, and authorised those torments and sufferings by means of which they actually compassed the death of so many thousands of innocent persons of both sexes—a plot that brought ruin on so great a body of people, that tore asunder countless families, arraying relatives against relatives, for the purpose of getting possession of their goods, whereupon they left them to die of hunger. A plot that caused our manufactures to pass over to foreigners, made foreign states flourish and overflow with wealth at the expense of our own, and enabled them to build new cities—that presented to the nation the spectacle of so vast a multitude of people that had committed no crime, proscribed, naked, wandering fugitives, seeking an asylum afar from their country—that consigned the noble, the wealthy, the aged, those highly esteemed in many cases for their piety, their learning, their virtue, those accustomed to a life of ease, frail, delicate, to hard labour in the galleys, under the overseer's lash, and for no other reason save their religion. A plot that, to crown all other horrors, filled every province of the kingdom with perjury and sacrilege ; inasmuch as, while the land rang with the cries of these unhappy victims of error, so many others sacrificed their consciences for their property, and their ease, purchasing both by means of feigned abjurations.'



THE END OF A FRUITLESS SEARCH.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE ALBIGENSES AND WALDENSES

Massacre at Beziers—Massacre at Lavaur—Women Martyrs in the Castle of Minerva—Women Martrys about 1538—Waldenses in Italy—Massacre at Merindol—Joan Mathurin—Cruelties at St. Xist—The Terrible Massacre of 1655—The Papal Crusaders and their Fiendish Work.

THE Albigensian, and subsequently the Waldensian Church, upheld the Protestant faith many centuries before the Reformation. There are learned writers who maintain the Apostolic origin of that Church, which since primitive times has consistently professed a form of religion in all essential points identical with that of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century. The persecution by the Church of Rome of these faithful witnesses was particularly severe in the thirteenth century. Any one who reads Sismondi's *History of the Crusades Against the Albigenses in the Thirteenth Century*, will find in it ample evidence of the murderous principles

which actuated the Church of Rome at that period, against an innocent, industrious, and virtuous people, whose only crime was the rejection of Papal supremacy.

It is well that a brief reference shall be made here to the persecutions of these Reformers before the Reformation, whose memories should not be forgotten. In the last year of the twelfth century Pope Innocent III. issued an edict against the Albigenses, ordering that all heretics should be treated as outcasts of the human family, and deprived of all human sympathy. Their property was to be confiscated, and their houses razed to the ground. A few years later this Pope ordered a general crusade against the Albigenses, and declared that, 'following the canonical sanctions of the holy fathers, we must not observe faith with those who keep not faith towards God, or who are separated from the communion of the faithful.'

As a result of Papal exhortations and commands, a great crusading army marched against the Albigenses. They besieged the city of Beziers during the summer of 1209, and at last forced an entrance. 'The Knights,' says Sismondi, 'learning that they had triumphed without fighting, inquired of the Legate, Arnold Amalric, Abbot of Citeaux, how they should distinguish the Catholics from the heretics, who

made them this much celebrated reply: "Kill them all; the Lord will know His own." ' At that moment the fixed population of Beziers exceeded fifteen thousand persons, but those who had fled to it for refuge had increased the number to about sixty thousand. A general massacre was ordered by the leaders of the Papal army, and before it had completed its work not a living soul was left in the city, excepting the invading soldiers. A great proportion of these were women and children who had been sent into the city by the Albigenses from all the surrounding neighbourhood, as the strongest place of refuge. 'This whole multitude,' continues Sismondi, 'at the moment when the crusaders became masters of the gates, took refuge in the churches; the great Cathedral of Saint Nicaise contained the greater number. The canons, clothed with their choral habits, surrounded the altar, and sounded the bells, as if to express their prayers to the furious assailants; but these supplications of brass were as little heard as those of the human voice. The bells ceased not to sound till, of that immense multitude which had taken refuge in the church, the last had been massacred. Neither were those spared who had sought an asylum in the other churches; seven thousand bodies were counted in that of the Magdalen alone. When the crusaders had massacred the last living creature

in Beziers, and had pillaged the houses of all that they thought worth carrying off, they set fire to the city, in every part at once, and reduced it to a vast funeral pile. Not a house remained standing, not one human being alive.'

When the crusaders approached Carcassone they discovered that the inhabitants had fled through an underground passage three leagues in length. The Papal Legate who commanded the army sent out his scouts into the fields round about, and collected four hundred and fifty men and women. Four hundred of these he burned alive, and the remaining fifty he hanged. On May 3, 1211, the crusaders succeeded in gaining an entrance into the town of Lavaur, and then another horrible massacre began. The Vice-Legate of the Pope, several bishops, and a company of priests clothed themselves in their pontifical, episcopal, and priestly vestments, and sang together the hymn *Veni Creator* while the massacre began.

> Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
> And lighten with celestial fire;
> Thou the anointing Spirit art,
> Who dost Thy seven-fold gifts impart, etc.

The Monk of Vaux Cernay, who lived at that time, tells us what next took place. He says of the crusaders :

'Very soon they dragged out of the castle,

Aimery, Lord of Montreal, and other Knights to the number of eighty. The noble Count immediately ordered them to be hanged upon the gallows; but, as soon as Aimery, the stoutest among them, was hanged, the gallows fell; for, in their great haste, they had not well fixed it in the earth. The Count, seeing that this would produce great delay, ordered the rest to be massacred; and the pilgrims, receiving the order with the greatest avidity, very soon massacred them all upon the spot. The lady of the castle, who was sister of Aimery, and an execrable heretic, was by the Count's orders thrown into a pit, which was filled up with stones; afterwards our pilgrims collected the innumerable heretics that the castle contained, *and burned them alive with infinite joy!*'

The siege of the Castle of Minerva, near Narbonne, was marked by similar atrocities. The crusaders entered the castle singing the *Te Deum*, preceded by the cross. All the Albigenses in the castle were collected together, the men in one house, the women in another. The Abbot of Vaux Cernay preached to them, urging them to submit to the Roman Catholic religion; but his efforts were in vain. 'We will have none of your faith,' said both women and men. 'We have renounced the Church of Rome; your labour is in vain, for neither life nor death will make us renounce the opinions that we have

embraced.' The women were even more resolute and enthusiastic in their refusals than the men.

Then the Count of Montfort, the commander of the crusaders, visited both women and men. He told them that an enormous mass of dry wood had been collected to burn them alive. 'Be converted to the Catholic faith,' he exclaimed, 'or ascend this pile.' Sismondi says that 'None were shaken. They set fire to the pile, which covered the whole square with a tremendous conflagration; and the heretics were then conducted to the place. But violence was not necessary to compel them to enter the flames; they voluntarily precipitated themselves into them, to the number of more than one hundred and forty, after commending their souls to that God in Whose cause they suffered Martyrdom. Three women only, forcibly retained by the noble Dame of Marly, mother of Bouchard, Lord of Montmorenci, were saved from the flames; and terror and consternation succeeding to their enthusiastic fervour, they consented to be converted.'

Similar scenes to those already described were witnessed until the close of this bloodthirsty Papal crusade, in which, says Greenwood, in his *Cathedra Petri*, 'the trumpet of Rome found an echo in every part of Christendom. Swarms of monks,' he adds, 'issued from the numberless

cells and monasteries of the Cistercian Order, preaching perdition to heretics, and boundless pardons to all who should shed the blood—were it only of one—of the accursed brood. There was no crime so black, no vice so rooted in the heart, but that a forty days' campaign against these outcasts would wipe it away, even to the last trace of guilt, nor leave the faintest sense of remorse behind. Myriads of all ranks and conditions of life obeyed the call.'

Another crusade was inaugurated in 1486 by Innocent VIII., who issued a Bull against the inhabitants of the Vaudois Valleys, in which he called on Roman Catholics to fight against them, absolving all who should join in the crusade from all ecclesiastical censures, setting them free from all vows they might have made, legitimising their possession of goods which they might have wrongly acquired, and granting a remission of sins to every one who might kill a heretic. 'Forthwith,' writes Muston, 'some thousands of volunteers—persons ambitious of distinction, vagabonds, fanatics, men without lawful employment, needy adventurers, plunderers of every description, and pitiless robbers and assassins—assembled from all parts of Italy to execute the behests of the pretended successor of St. Peter. This horde of depredators and brigands, an army worthy of a Pontiff whose own

life was scandalous, marched upon the Valleys, in company with eighteen thousand regular troops, jointly furnished by the King of France and the Sovereign of Piedmont.' The suffering inflicted by these crusaders on helpless women and children, as well as on the men, are fully known only to Him to whom vengeance belongeth. We cannot, however, linger over this part of Waldensian history, but proceed at once to the period of the Reformation. It would be impossible adequately to describe the sufferings of the inhabitants of the Vaudois Valleys at the hands of the Church of Rome. Milton's sonnet expressed, however, the feeling aroused amongst Protestant peoples :

Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy faith so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in Thy book record their groans
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. The moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who, having learned Thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

It is impossible to describe here one hundredth part of the sufferings which the Waldensian women endured at the hands of their relentless

persecutors at and since the Reformation. I can, therefore, only select a few instances out of many, proving that in the Vaudois Valleys, as well as throughout the world, the power of God made weak women strong to suffer for the Saviour they loved. What the Apostle writes in the Epistle to the Hebrews may well be applied to them and their martyred brethren : ' And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ' (Heb. xi. 36–38).

The stories of their sufferings as recorded by Dr. Alexis Muston, in his *Israel of the Alps*, and in Morland's *History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piedmont* (London, 1658), are enough to move to tears the most unfeeling of mankind who are not made hard-hearted through the witcheries of ' the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' The illustrations in Morland's folio volume, picturing the tortures of the Waldenses, are so fearful that, probably, no modern publisher would dare to reproduce them. At present we must content ourselves with the

following summary of executions of godly men and women who suffered about the year 1538, as recorded by Muston.

'Jordan Tertian was burned alive at Suza; Hyppolyte Roussier was burned at Turin; Villermin Ambroise was hanged on the Col de Méane; Ugon Chiamps, of Fenestrelle, was taken at Suza, and conducted to Turin, where his bowels were torn out and flung into a basin, without his sufferings being terminated even by this frightful torture. Peter Geymonat, of Bobi, died at Lucerna, with a living cat in the interior of his body. Mary Romaine was buried alive at Roche-Plate. Madalene Fontaine suffered the same fate at St. John; Michael Gonet, a man almost a hundred years of age, was burned alive at Sarcena. Susanna Michelin, at the same place, was left in a dying state upon the snow. Bartholomew Frache, having been hacked with sabres, had his wounds filled with quicklime, and expired in this manner at Fenil. David Michelin had his tongue torn out at Bobi, for having praised God. James Baridon died, covered with brimstone matches, which they had fastened between his fingers, and about his lips, his nostrils, and all parts of his body. Daniel Rével had his mouth filled with gunpowder, which was set on fire, and the explosion of which tore his head in pieces. Mary Mounin was taken

in the Combe of Liousa ; the flesh of her cheeks and of her chin were removed, so that the jaws were exposed, and in this way she was left to die. Paul Gariner was slowly mangled at Rora, Thomas Marguet mutilated in an indescribable manner at the Fort of Mirabouc, and Susanna Jaquin cut in pieces at La Tour. A number of young women of Taillaret, in order to escape outrages still more dreadful to them than death, flung themselves from a precipice, and perished among the rocks. Sarah Rostagnol was cleft up through the middle of her body, and was left in a dying state on the road from Eyrals to Lucerna. Anne Charbonnier was impaled alive, and borne in this state like a banner, from St. Jean to La Tour. At Paësane, Daniel Rambaud had his nails torn out, then his fingers were cut off, then his feet and hands were severed by blows of hatchets, and then his arms and legs were separated from his body, upon each refusal that he made to abjure the Gospel.

'There is not a rock in the Vaudois Valleys which may not be looked on as a monument of death, not a meadow but has been the scene of some execution, not a village but has its martyrs. No history, however complete, can contain a record of them.'

This is very awful, but it is but a hundredth part

of the horrors which I shrink from describing. If Rome had ever repented of these her crimes, something might be said in favour of allowing the history of the past to be blotted out. But she has not repented. The persecuting principles which are responsible for these awful crimes are still hers to-day. The right to put heretics to death is taught by her priests with a zeal which her priests of the sixteenth century did not exceed. It is necessary, therefore, to remember the past. In the words of Dr. Grattan Guinness, we say :

> Hide not these horrors, lest the baneful night
> Which gave them birth return to quench our light.
> Recall the memory of the blessed dead,
> His Martyrs whom the Lord hath comforted.

For about two hundred years a colony of Waldenses had inhabited a portion of Provence, in the south of France. When they first arrived they found the place a barren wilderness ; but by their industry and perseverance villages had sprung up, and prosperity abounded on every hand. In the year 1540 two agents were sent into the district, in order that they might gather information concerning their condition for the guidance of the King of France. These two men, Roman Catholics though they were, reported that the Waldenses residing in Provence were a people distinguished for their love of peace

and quiet, and for strict adherence to truthfulness in the everyday affairs of life. They were pure in their conduct and conversation, were kind to the unfortunate, and their humanity to travellers knew no bounds. But they would not go to mass, offered no candles, avoided relics, and paid no reverence to the crosses set up on road-sides.

Of course, these good people were Protestants, and so had their ancestors been ever since Christianity entered the Vaudois Valleys. When they first heard of the work of Martin Luther they were intensely interested, and delighted to find that opposition to Rome was increasing on every hand. But they had bitter enemies to contend with, especially amongst the Roman Catholic bishops and priests, who thirsted for their blood. These prelates tolerated the most abominable crimes in their own ranks, but toleration for those who, however upright and moral they might be, refused to bow to the rule of the Pope, was out of the question. At last, in an underhand way, they obtained from the King an order, dated November 18, 1540, by which it was decreed that thirteen Protestants residing in the village of Merindol, who had refused to appear before the Parliament of Provence to answer a charge of heresy (well knowing that if they had appeared their death was certain), should be burnt alive as heretics (though they had never been tried before

any court), their wives and children were to be proscribed, and all their possessions confiscated. It was further ordered that every house in Merindol should be burnt and razed to the ground, and even all the trees cut down within two hundred paces of the houses destroyed.

The work of carrying out this most unjust decree against an innocent and God-fearing people was undertaken by Baron d'Oppède, first President of the Parliament of Provence, and a most ferocious bigot; but several circumstances postponed its execution for nearly five years. At last, with a large company of soldiers, he appeared before Merindol. The inhabitants had fled before his arrival, excepting some women found in the church. The soldiers treated them with great barbarity and with shocking outrages. They were stripped of their clothing, compelled to join hands as for a dance, then marched round the castle, while the brutes cut them most cruelly with daggers and pikes, amid shouts of uproarious laughter. Then they were flung alive from the top of the rock on which the castle was built, and dashed to pieces.

One poor old woman was reserved for different treatment. They shaved her in the form of a cross, decked her with some worthless ornaments, dragged her through the streets to a bakery, where an oven was ready for baking bread. The

soldiers pushed her forward with their weapons, and ordered her to 'Go in there!' The old woman was about to enter the oven without resistance, when some of those standing by, having more humanity than the soldiers, interfered. Then the soldiers set fire to the village, and destroyed it, in accordance with the royal edict.

From Merindol, Baron d'Oppède proceeded to Cabrières, where he arrived on Sunday, April 19. He found the place barricaded against his entrance. All that day and night he tried to gain an entrance, but in vain. On Monday morning d'Oppède ordered his soldiers to stop fighting. He then wrote a letter to the inhabitants, promising that if they would open the gates he would do them no harm. Most unwisely they trusted to his word of honour, but only to find that he was the champion of that Church which has so frequently acted on the principle that faith should not be kept with heretics.

No sooner had the soldiers entered the town than d'Oppède commanded the principal personages to be brought before him. Eighteen men answered the summons. 'Kill them all!' he shouted to his soldiers, and in a few moments every one of these defenceless Protestants was butchered in cold blood. The work of carnage then proceeded. Some women fled to a barn for protection, and refused to come out. The barn

was set on fire, and at last the poor creatures, to save themselves from the fire, jumped from the walls of the barn, but only to be received on the points of the pikes and swords of the soldiers.

'But how,' asks Muston, 'shall I describe the scene which took place in the church? It was the most horrible and sacrilegious scene of all; for it was there that a great number of the women and young girls of the place had taken refuge. . . . The advocate Guèrin, who was present there, said in his deposition, "I think I saw four hundred or five hundred poor souls of women and children killed in that church."

'The prisoners who were not put to death by order of the President [d'Oppède] were sold by the soldiers to those who recruited for the royal galleys. However, the [Papal] Vice-Legate would not suffer any quarter to be given. Such was the spirit of Popery in its most exalted representatives. This Legate also, having learned that twenty-five persons, the greater number of whom were mothers of families, were concealed in a cave near Mys, although it was not within the bounds of the Papal territories, marched thither to destroy them. Arriving at the entrance of the cave, he gave orders for discharges of musketry, but no one came out. Thereupon he caused a great fire to be kindled in the mouth of the cave,

and every living creature in it was stifled to death. Five years after their dried bones were still to be seen.'

In this expedition d'Oppède utterly destroyed twenty-two towns and villages, and murdered at least three thousand innocent Protestant men, women, and children who had committed no offences against the laws of their country. They were the victims of 'the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.' Father Paul, in his *History of the Council of Trent*, says that 'it is certain that more than four thousand persons were slain, who, without making defence, desired mercy.' Subsequently d'Oppède was tried for the part he took in this expedition of blood, but was acquitted and restored to office. While the trial was proceeding, public prayers were offered by the priests in the churches for his deliverance, and when the decision was made known public thanksgivings were offered. This cruel man had a most miserable death. De Thou, the French historian, states that a little after his acquittal d'Oppède 'was tormented with horrible pains in his bowels for a long time, and amid the most cruel tortures he breathed out his most cruel soul; and so received from God the just punishment which the judges had spared to him.'

Many Protestants suffered death in the town

of Carignan, Italy, in the year 1560. The first of these was a French fugitive named Mathurin. When arrested, the commissioners told him that he must either renounce the Protestant religion or be put to death. He said that he preferred to die. 'We will give you three days to consider,' the commissioners informed him; 'but if after that time you do not recant, you will be burnt alive.' Mathurin had married a Vaudois woman, named Joan. It was, therefore, but natural that, being in the neighbourhood, when she heard of his arrest, she asked leave to visit him. 'You may see him,' replied the commissioners, 'but on condition that you do not harden him in his errors.' 'I promise you,' she said, 'that I will not speak to him except for his good.' With this promise they had to be content, and as they expected she would persuade her husband to recant, she was granted an interview. But, much as she loved her husband, to persuade him to give up his religion was the last thing in her thoughts. 'Accordingly,' writes an old chronicler, 'she exhorted him, as earnestly as possible, in the presence of the commissioners, steadfastly to persevere in his religion, and not to put the death of his body, which is of brief duration, into the balance against the eternal salvation of his soul.' The commissioners were amazed at this unexpected result of their concession, and their rage

soon found vent in abuse of the faithful wife, who continued to address her husband with such words as these :

Joan.—'Let not the assaults of the wicked one make you abandon the profession of your hope in Jesus Christ.'

Commissioners.—'Exhort him to obey us, or you shall both be hanged.'

Joan.—'And let not the love of this world's possessions make you lose the inheritance of heaven!'

Commissioners.—'Heretical she-devil! If you do not change your tone, you shall be burned to-morrow.'

Joan.—'Would I have come to persuade him to die rather than abjure, if I could myself seek to escape death rather than apostasy?'

Commissioners.—'You should fear, at any rate, the torments of the pile.'

Joan.—'I fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into a more terrible fire than your billets.'

Commissioners.—'Hell is for heretics; save yourselves by renouncing your errors.'

Joan.—'Where can truth be, if not in the words of God?'

Commissioners.—'This will be the destruction of you both.'

'Blessed be God!' said the wife to her

husband, 'because, having united us in life, He will not separate us in death!'

Commissioners.—'Instead of one, we shall have two of them to burn.'

Joan.—'I will be his companion to the end.'

Commissioners.—'Will you come to mass, and have your pardon?'

Joan.—'I would much rather go to the pile, and have eternal life.'

Commissioners.—'If you do not abjure, your husband shall be burned to-morrow, and you three days after.'

Joan.—'We shall meet again in heaven.'

Commissioners.—'Think of the delay that is still granted to you.'

Joan.—'The length of it is of no consequence, for my resolution is for life.'

Commissioners.—'Say, rather, it is for death.'

Joan.—'The death of the body, but the life of the soul.'

Commissioners.—'Have you nothing else to say to us, you obstinate wretch?'

Joan.—'Nothing; except that I beseech you not to put off my execution for three days, but to let me die with my husband.'

This last request of the heroic wife was granted. On the night before their execution this faithful couple spent some time together in earnest prayer. On the nxet day, March 6, 1560, they were brought

out together to the public square of the town of Carignan, 'and there,' writes Dr. Muston, to whose work I am indebted for these particulars, 'these worthy confessors of the Gospel died, holding one another by the hand, and with souls united in the love of the Saviour.'

In this same year sixty females of St. Xist were so cruelly tortured by the Romanists that the cords with which they were bound sunk into their flesh to such a depth, and remained there for so long a time, that devouring vermin which could only be killed by quicklime, were engendered in their wounds. Some of these unfortunate women died in the dungeons as a consequence, others were burnt alive, and some were sold to the highest bidders for the vilest purposes. At Montalto eighty-eight men were brought out of prison one day, and had their throats cut by one executioner. On the same day a decree was issued ordering one hundred Waldensian women to be tortured. These women, after undergoing cruel racking, were all put to death.

All through the sixteenth century, and the first half of the seventeenth century, the persecutions of the Waldenses were continued, with but brief intervals of comparative peace between. The sufferings of these faithful Protestants during that period are described at length in the pages of

Muston. Yet, severe as they were, they were as nothing compared with what they endured during the terrible massacre of 1655. This fearful crime was organised by a local Council of the Congregation of the Propaganda of the Faith. Its meetings were held in the palace of the Archbishop of Turin, and amongst its members were the Archbishop himself; the King's Confessor, Rorengo, Grand Prior of Lucerna; the Abbé de la Mena; the President of the Senate; and the Minister of State. At the instigation of this Council the Duke of Savoy sent a great army into the Waldensian valleys to massacre every Protestant inhabitant who should refuse to join the Church of Rome.

On Easter Eve, Saturday, April 24, 1655, the signal for a general massacre was given to the troops from the summit of the Castle of La Tour, at four o'clock in the morning. The horrors that followed exceed all that could be imagined. Muston tells us, on the authority of Leger:

'Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, dashed against the rocks, and cast carelessly away. The sick and the aged, both men and women, were either burned in their houses, or hacked in pieces, or mutilated, half murdered, and flayed alive; they were exposed in a dying state to the heat of the sun, or to flames, or to ferocious beasts; others were tied, in a state of nakedness, into the form of balls, the head

between the legs, and in this state were rolled down the precipices. Some of them, torn and bruised by the rocks from which they had rebounded, remained suspended from some projecting rock or the branch of some tree, and still groaned forty-eight hours afterwards. Women and young girls were . . . buried alive, roasted upon lances, and cut in pieces by these "Soldiers of the Faith" as by cannibals . . . and finally, the massacre and the removal of children were succeeded by conflagration—the monks, the propagandists, and the zealous Catholics running from house to house with resinous torches or incendiary projectiles, and ravaging, in the midst of the fires, these villages now filled with corpses.

'"Two of the most infuriated of these fire-raisers," says a work of the period, "were a priest and a monk of the Order of St. Francis, who marched about, escorted by troops; and if there was any hidden cottage which had not fallen into their hands on the first occasion, they might be seen re-passing on the morrow; and to finish their work the priest had only to discharge his carbine, loaded with an artificial fire, which stuck to the walls."'

Leger, the leading Protestant historian of these events, writes:

'And let it not be said that I exaggerate things upon account of the persecutions which I myself

have personally endured. I have travelled from one neighbourhood to another to collect the authentic testimonies of the survivors, who deponed what things they had seen before two notaries who accompanied me. In some places fathers had seen their children torn through the midst by the strength of men's arms, or cut through with swords; in other places mothers had seen their daughters forced or murdered in their presence. Daughters had witnessed the mutilation of the living bodies of their fathers; brothers had seen the mouths of their brothers filled with powder, to which the persecutors set fire, making the head fly in pieces. What shall I say? O my God! the pen falls from my hand. Dead bodies lay scattered about or were planted upon stakes; portions of children, torn in quarters, had been flung into the middle of the road.'

In one place, says Morland, these Papal crusaders cruelly tormented no fewer than one hundred and fifty women and small children, and afterwards cut off the heads of some, and dashed the brains of others against the rocks. Oliver Cromwell sent this same Mr. Samuel Morland to the Duke of Savoy, to beg him to order his troops to stop their savage work, and to give liberty and peace to the Protestants in the Vaudois Valleys. In his speech to the Duke

of Savoy, Mr. Morland told him to his face: 'Now what, or what manner of cruelty have not those soldiers of late dared to act, or hath been committed by them? Oh! the fired houses which are yet smoking, the torn limbs, and ground defiled with blood! . . . Some men a hundred years old, decrepit with age, and bed-rid, have been burnt in their beds. Some infants have been dashed against the rocks, others their throats cut. . . . What need I mention more? although I could reckon up very many cruelties of the like kind, if I were not astonished at the very thought of them. . . . In the meantime the angels are surprised with horror! men are amazed! Heaven itself seems to be astonished with the cries of dying men, and the very earth to blush, being discoloured with the gore-blood of so many innocent persons.'

Several of the women martyrs who suffered during this bitter persecution are mentioned by name in Morland's work.

Sara Rastignole des Vignes, about sixty years of age, was seized by the crusading soldiers, who ordered her to say her prayers. She did as she was bid, but as she had omitted to pray to the saints, they commanded her to do so at once. She was a brave woman, made strong by the grace of God; she knew the fate that awaited her should she refuse, but being faithful she

declined to do as was wished. Thereupon the soldiers thrust a sickle into her body, and ripped her open; not content with this, they dragged her about the ground while half dead, until another soldier, coming up, took pity on her sufferings by severing her head from her body. The poor woman's daughter-in-law was a witness of this savage conduct. Martha Constantin, the wife of one Jacopo Barral, was forced to witness the murder of several other Protestants, and then her turn came. A poor woman was seen flying from the soldiers carrying on her head a cradle containing her infant child. At last she left the cradle behind, believing they would not injure an innocent babe; but the brutes tore the child asunder, limb from limb, after which they overtook and killed the mother. The daughter of Moses Long, of Bobio, only ten years of age, was overtaken by the soldiers as she was flying from them. They ran a pike lengthways through her body, and then roasted her alive with it. This fiendish act they afterwards made a subject for boasting! The wife of Daniel Salvagiol, of Bobio, had a quantity of gunpowder crammed down her mouth and throat. The crusaders then set fire to it, the result being that her head was torn to pieces. Margaret Revel, of La Carteret, aged eighty-five; Maria di Pravillerm, aged ninety,

and blind; Madona Lena, aged eighty, and blind; and Jeanna Batzan, aged ninety—were most cruelly burnt alive.

The widow of Giovanni Ugon, of La Torre, who had been sick in bed for three years, was taken by the crusaders, together with one of her daughters, placed on a cart, and both carried thus through the streets of La Torre. As they passed along, the Papist soldiers stabbed their bodies with prongs, pitchforks, and similar instruments; while others bruised their bodies with flints. They were thus taken to the river, into which they were flung and drowned. The daughter of Pietro Mallanot, a councillor of St. Giovanni, was rolled down a high precipice from the top to the bottom, with her infant brother, only eight months old, in her arms. Two days later the distracted father found their dead bodies in the snow, the infant being still in its sister's arms. The same treatment was given to the wife of Pol Farise, who was hurled down from a high rock with her infant child in her arms. Three days after she was found dead, with her little child still clasped in her arms; yet, strange to say, the child was still alive. Catherina, the wife of Pietro Simond, was a decrepit old woman; but human pity was unknown to the hearts of the crusaders. They first dashed her brains out against a rock, and then threw her down a

precipice. Maria, the wife of Daniel Monino, was taken by the soldiers in the village of Liuzza. They first broke her jaws into pieces; then they gave her a very deep cut in the neck, so that her head was half cut off, yet in such a way that, after they left her, she lived on for several days, suffering unutterable torments, and at last the poor creature expired.

'There was,' says Morland, 'one very remarkable (event) concerning Marguerita, the wife of Joseph Garniero, and sister to Captain Joshua Giavavel; for she, having received a shot in one of her breasts, as she was giving suck to a little child with the other, was yet so hearty and courageous, that she exhorted her husband, with many pathetical expressions, to "endure the Cross with patience," and to "hold out to the end"; neither did she at all desire any favour of the massacrers, save only to spare the life of her innocent babe; which accordingly they did; but immediately gave the mother another shot in her body, whereof she died; and afterwards the infant was found alive in the dead mother's arms, and so miraculously preserved.'

These are but a very few cases of female martyrdom, under the most awful circumstances, out of a vast number which are recorded by Morland.

CHAPTER VII

WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE NETHERLANDS

The Work of the Inquisition—The Widow Claes—Edict of Charles V.—An Old Woman's Appeal to her Judges—The Wife of Pauli—Maria of Beckum—Her Sister Ursel—A Young Lady named Elizabeth—Lysen Dirks—Her Letters—Felistio Jans—Berentge—Levina—Robert Oguier, his Wife and Two Sons.

PROBABLY more Protestants have been put to death in the Netherlands for their religion than in any other country in the world. The land has been simply deluged with Protestant blood. A Dutch writer named Koornhert states that one who had searched most of the registers found that as early as 1566, when the troubles of the Reformers in that land were at their height, upwards of thirty-six thousand Protestants had been slaughtered in cold blood. Motley records that, two years later, the Inquisition actually condemned all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as heretics. The King of

Spain, Philip II., ten days after receiving a copy of this awful decree, issued a proclamation, by which he ordered that it should at once be carried out, without regard to age, sex, or condition.

'This,' writes Motley, 'is probably the most concise death-warrant that was ever framed. Three millions of people, men, women, and children, were sentenced to the scaffold in three lines; and, as it was well known that these were not harmless thunders, like some Bulls of the Vatican, but serious and practical measures, which were to be enforced, the horror which they produced may be easily imagined. . . . To avoid the disturbances created in the streets by the frequent harangues or exhortations addressed to the bystanders by the victims on the way to the scaffold, a new gag was invented. The tongue of each prisoner was screwed into an iron ring, and then seared with a hot iron. The swelling and inflammation which were the immediate result prevented the tongue from slipping through the ring, and of course effectually precluded all possibility of speech.'

The execution of this terrible decree was undertaken by the Blood Council, as it was termed. It had been created in the previous year by order of Philip II., and although it failed, thank God, to carry out the order of the Papal Inquisition in its entirety, it was not through want of will, but

want of power. The Blood Council was under the control of the Duke of Alva. This merciless brute went to work with a hearty goodwill to carry out the orders of the Inquisition, and after he had been at his murderous work about two years he received a reward for his services to the Church of Rome, at the hands of Pope Pius V. (now *Saint* Pius V.), who sent him as a present a jewelled hat, and a blessed sword to carry on his work. With the present the Pope sent the Duke an autograph letter, in which he told him to 'remember when he put the hat upon his head, that he was guarded with it as with a helmet of righteousness, and with the shield of God's help, indicating the heavenly crown which was ready for all Princes who support the Holy Church and the Roman Catholic Faith.'

It is true that when this infamous letter was written, the Netherlanders were at war with their King, Philip II.; and if the Duke had conducted his share of the operations in accordance with the customs of civilised nations, we need not have been surprised at the pontifical approval of his deeds, shown in this emphatic manner. But Alva was simply a wholesale butcher of human beings, making no distinction between the prisoners captured in battle and the innocent non-combatants, men and women, whose only offence was their Protestantism. The Pope knew all about his

cruelties, and was even at this moment himself the head of the Inquisition which had sentenced three millions of human beings to death; and yet he praised and rewarded him.

A large number of the women martyrs of the Netherlands were Baptists. Their sufferings are recorded in *A Martyrology of the Churches of Christ commonly called Baptists*, by T. J. Van Braght, a translation of which into English was published in 1850 by the Hanserd Knollys Society, in two volumes. The editor, referring to the martyrs whose sufferings he records, remarks: 'We are well satisfied that all these martyrs agreed in the essential articles of faith. They all believed in the one, eternal, true God, the Father, and in His only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. They all looked to the sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb, on Whom the Father hath laid the propitiation for our sins. They gave themselves up, yea, by the covenant of baptism bound themselves to obey that Lord, Who was ordained by the Father to be their teacher and lawgiver. They expected a blessed resurrection, and the glorious recompense promised to all those who, by the Spirit's grace, earnestly and perseveringly press forward in the race of the Christian calling, towards the prize set before them.' It would, therefore, I think, be unjust to hold these orthodox and evangelical

Anabaptists responsible for the heresies and fanatical opinions of that section of Anabaptists whose views they did not adopt, but rather repudiated. They deserve to be considered as much martyrs of Protestantism as those who did not adopt their views of infant baptism.

One of the women who were the first to lay down their lives in the Netherlands, as Protestants, was a widow named Claes, a Baptist. Brandt, in his *History of the Reformation in the Low Countries*, calls her Wendelmoet Klaas; while Foxe terms her Wendelmuta, a daughter of Nicholas, of Munchenstein. On November 15, 1527, she was brought as a prisoner to The Hague, and on the 18th she appeared before Count Van Hoogstraten, Stadtholder of Holland, and the Council, to answer certain charges brought against her, of holding opinions contrary to those of the Church of Rome. Here are interesting extracts from some of the questions put to her, together with her replies :—

Question.—'If you do not speak and turn away from your error, an intolerable death awaits you.'

Answer.—'If the power is given you from above, I am content to suffer.'

Question.—'Are you not then afraid of death, which you have not tasted?'

Answer.—'True; but I shall never taste of

death, for Christ says: "If any man keep My words, he shall never taste of death."'

Question.—'What do you hold concerning the sacrament?'

Answer.—'I hold your sacrament to be flour and bread, and where you hold it to be a god, I say that it is your devil.'

Question.—'What do you think concerning the saints?'

Answer.—'I know no other mediator than Christ.'

Question.—'Will you have a confessor, or not?'

Answer.—'I have Christ; to Him I confess; but, nevertheless, if I have offended any one, I will gladly entreat him to forgive me.'

Question.—'Who has taught you this opinion? and how have you come by it?'

Answer.—'The Lord, Who calls all men unto Him: I am one of His sheep; therefore, I hear His voice.'

Question.—'Are you alone then called?'

Answer.—'Oh, no! for the Lord calls to Him all that are heavy-laden.'

When her examination was ended, this pious widow was sent back to a dungeon. During the two following days she was visited by many persons, all anxious to persuade her to recant and thus save her life. Some of them were, no

doubt, moved by a spirit of mistaken kindness; amongst them being a lady of noble birth, who said to her: 'Dear mother! can you not think as you please, and be silent?' To which the reply was: 'Dear sister! I am commanded and compelled to speak, so that I cannot be silent.'

Lady.—'I fear, then, that they will kill you.'

Claes.—'Whether to-morrow they burn me, or put me in a sack, that is all one to me. If it be the Lord's appointment, it must come to pass; not otherwise. *I will cleave unto the Lord.*'

Lady.—'If you have done nothing else, I hope that you will not die.'

Claes.—'To me it is indifferent; but on descending from the hall I wept much. It distresses me to see all these clever men so blinded. I will pray to the Lord for them.'

In the answers of this persecuted child of God we see a conspicuous instance of Christian forgiveness. She wept, yet not for herself; but for her persecutors. Two of her visitors were monks, and we may be quite sure they came not from Christian charity, but for the purpose of gaining a triumph for their Church. One offered his services as her father confessor; the other as her instructor in Popery. The instructor began his unhappy task by placing a crucifix before her.

Monk.—'See, here is the Lord your God.'

Widow.—'That is not my God. It is another cross by which I am redeemed. That is a wooden god; throw him into the fire, and warm yourself by him.'

Monk.—'Methinks you are beside yourself.'

Widow.—'That I cannot help; the Lord my God, to Whom be eternal praise and thanks, has given it me so to do.'

A day or two later the prisoner was again brought before her judges, this time to receive sentence. As she entered the hall, the monk who had visited her in prison, and offered her the crucifix, once more presented himself, and again placed the crucifix before her face, saying, 'Recant before the sentence is pronounced'; to which she nobly answered, 'I cleave unto my Lord and my God. Neither death nor life shall separate me from Him.' When she again stood before her judges, she showed no sign of fear. The Inquisitor was there, and he by a formal sentence handed her over to the civil power for punishment as a heretic; and then the Chancellor ordered that she should be burnt to ashes, and her goods confiscated. When he concluded, she meekly said, 'If it is now all done, I pray all of you, that if I have injured or provoked any one, you will forgive me.' As she left the hall the same

troublesome monk again spoke to her, and urged her to call upon the Virgin Mary for help. She answered, 'Our Lady is happy in repose with God.'

Monk.—'Call upon her.'

Widow.—'We have Christ, Who sits at the right hand of the Father; He intercedes for us.'

Monk.—'Do you not dread the severe judgment of God?'

Widow.—'God comes not to condemn sinners, but to give them peace.'

Monk.—'Do you not fear the ordeal you must suffer in the fire?'

Widow.—'Not I; for I know how I stand with my God.'

Happy, though sorely tried, widow! She was at peace with God, and knew it, and this gave her courage to face death. Without that certainty of her own salvation she would, probably, have recanted. That dread, lest all was not sure, has led many a man and woman to recant rather than burn. She seems to have been taken direct from receiving her sentence to the place of execution. God's grace and strength were all-powerful with her at that solemn hour. She was perfectly calm, and showed a courage which God alone could have given her. It is stated that her countenance never once moved at the sight of the fire. She

even gave active assistance to the executioner in his work, by herself placing in her bosom the gunpowder which was intended to facilitate her death. She walked without any assistance to the stake. It had been decided that she should be strangled first, and then that her body should be cast into the fire. It seems as though even her executioner were on her side at the last, for he said to her, 'Mother, abide by God, and suffer not yourself to be drawn away from Him.' She then removed her scarf from her neck, and even fastened the strap which was to strangle her on to her neck. And then, when everything was ready for the last act, the pertinacious monk worried her again :—

Monk.—'My good Weynken, do you wish to die as a Christian ?'

Widow.—'Yes ; I do.'

Monk.—'Do you renounce all heresy ?'

Widow.—'I do.'

Monk.—'That is right. Are you likewise sorry that you have erred ?'

Widow.—'I erred formerly, for that I am sorry ; but this is no error—it is the right way. *I cleave to God.*'

'When she had thus spoken,' says the old Dutch writer who reports the trial, 'the executioner proceeded to strangle her, which when she felt, she cast down her eyes and closed them, as

if she had fallen asleep, and gave up the ghost the 20th day of November, 1527.'

> Servant of God, well done;
> Rest from thy loved employ;
> The battle fought, the victory won,
> Enter thy Master's joy.

In those days it was a specially dangerous thing to be a Baptist of any kind, whether orthodox or heretical. Rome hated Baptists with a deadly hatred. Eight years after these faithful ones were cast into prison, the Emperor Charles V. issued an edict against the Baptists, sentencing every one of them residing in the Netherlands to death.

'It having come to our knowledge,' said the Emperor in this edict of 1535, 'that, notwithstanding our aforesaid mandates, many and various sectaries (even some who are denominated Anabaptists, or re-baptisers) have promoted, and are daily promoting, the spreading, sowing, and secret preaching of their said abuses and errors, in order to draw over to their false doctrine and reprobate sect a great number of men and women, in order to mislead the same, and some of them to re-baptise, to the great scandal and contempt of the sacrament of baptism, and of our edicts, statutes, and ordinances. Therefore, being desirous to provide against and remedy the same, we summon and command that, from this time,

having seen these presents, you make proclamation, in all the parts and limits of your jurisdiction, that all who are or shall be found to be infected by the accursed sect of Anabaptists, or re-baptisers, of what state or condition soever they be, their abettors, followers, and accomplices, shall suffer the forfeiture of life and estate, and shall without any delay be brought to the severest punishment; that is to say, they who remain obstinate, and harden themselves in their wicked opinions and purposes, or who have seduced and re-baptised any person, or who have borne and had the name of Prophets, Apostles, or Bishops, shall be put to death by fire. And all other sorts of people, who have been re-baptised, or who secretly and with previous counsel have harboured any of the said Anabaptists, or re-baptisers, and who renounce their evil purposes and opinions, and sincerely repent, and are sorry for the same. shall be put to death with the sword, and the women in a sunken pit.'

It will be observed that there was no mercy allowed by this edict to any one, man or woman. Nothing they could do would enable them to escape the death penalty, for even though they repented and became Papists, they were to be executed. Even the Romanists who, out of charity and kindness, might harbour any of the Anabaptists, were also to be put to death, without

hope of mercy. It was under this edict that, in 1558, at Kortrijk, in Flanders, a young man named Daniel Verkampt was arrested, and afterwards burnt alive. His mother also was arrested at the same time, not for heresy herself, but on the charge of harbouring her son. It is said that she was a little old woman, and walked with a staff. She made a most moving, and, fortunately, successful appeal to her judges.

'Gentlemen,' she asked, 'must I forfeit life and goods, because I have now and then harboured my own son in his distress, whom I bore on my heart, brought forth with pain, and nurtured with anxiety, he being neither a thief nor a rogue, but admitted to be the most worthy young man in the village? and that only because you say he is a heretic? I think that were the Emperor here present whose proclamation you say you have, he would say that you made a wrong use of it, and would commend me because my mother's heart was moved to compassionate my son, who never deserved otherwise from me. Verily, gentlemen, this is contrary to the wisdom and courtesy that become you; for be assured that at the same hour you came to seize him, if I could have concealed him in my womb, and again have borne him nine months, and give him birth, and bring him up, as I once before had done, God knows how willingly I would have done it.'

Human compassion to a mother's pathetic appeal for once moved the judges, and they acquitted her, while they sent her son to the stake; but it was evidently an acquittal in contravention of the Emperor's edict.

On September 11, 1538, three women and one man were strangled at the same time, at a place called Vugt, in North Brabant. One of them was the wife of a Baptist teacher named Pauli. As usual in such cases, a number of monks attended the execution, for the purpose of urging the prisoners to recant. Instead of doing so, Pauli's wife prayed for her persecutors, as her Saviour had done before. 'O Lord,' she cried, 'wilt Thou enlighten the eyes of those who inflict this suffering upon us, that they may see what they do? I thank Thee, O God, that Thou countest me worthy to suffer for Thy name's sake.' A Dominican priest present said to another of the women about to die, 'Do you not abide by the Holy Church?' to which the forcible reply was, 'I abide by God; is not that enough of Holy Church for me?' The third woman is reported to have prayed, 'O Almighty God! lay not upon me more than I can bear.' A child of hers, only nine months old, was taken from Pauli's wife while she was in prison, and forcibly baptised by the priests, who got two women and one man to act as god-parents to the child. It is note-

worthy that all three afterwards became Protestant martyrs, though what became of the child we are not told.

Six years later a woman named Maria, of Beckum, in the diocese of Utrecht, was arrested while in bed, and taken to prison. Before leaving her brother's house, where she had been in hiding, she asked his wife, named Ursel, if she would go with her, to bear her company? The reply was that, if her brother were willing, 'I will readily go with you, and we will rejoice in the Lord together.' He gave consent, though he must have known how dangerous a thing it was for his wife thus to accompany an arrested heretic. Her mother and sister tried hard to persuade her not to go; but all in vain. Maria and Ursel were then taken together to Daventer, where every effort was made to move them from their faith; but in vain. 'We abide,' they said, 'by God's Word, and regard neither the ordinances of the Pope nor the errors of the whole world.'

After an interval they were both removed from Daventer to Delden. A commissary from the court of Burgundy came to see them in the latter place, who praised Popery to the skies, but failed to make them fall in love with it. He asked them if they believed Christ was present, whole and entire, in the sacrament? They

said: 'God will have no likeness or image in heaven or earth, for He says by the Prophet, "I, even I, am the Lord, and there is none other." But concerning the Supper of the Lord, we find that Christ left it of bread and wine in remembrance of His death; as oft as we partake of it we show the Lord's death till He come.'

On November 13, 1538, Maria and Ursel were brought before the court at Delden and sentenced to death by fire. Instead of being sad and cast down on account of the painful death before them, these faithful women rejoiced and praised God for the honour He had conferred on them, of suffering for His sake. While they were being led to the stake many of the Protestants around them wept for sorrow of heart; but the martyrs urged them to dry up their tears. 'Weep not for us,' they said; 'we do not suffer as sorceresses, or other evil doers, but because we cleave to Christ, and will not depart from God. Repent ye, and it will be well with you for ever.'

At the stake Maria exultingly said to Ursel, 'My dear sister, heaven is opened to receive us; for the sufferings of a short space we shall rejoice with our Bridegroom for ever.' They then affectionately kissed each other, after which they united in earnest prayer, asking God especially to pardon their judges for their sins (for they knew not what they did), as with the world they were

sunk in blindness. And then they prayed for themselves, that God would have mercy upon them, and receive their souls unto His eternal kingdom.

Maria was the first to be tied to the stake. She asked the magistrates to shed no more innocent blood, and then looking up at the stake, her face beaming with joy, she exclaimed: 'To Thee, O Christ, have I resigned myself. I know that I shall live with Thee for ever; therefore, into Thy hands, O God of Heaven, I commend my spirit.' The chain by which she was fastened was not fixed to please the executioner, and this angered him, and made him begin to swear. Turning round she mildly rebuked him. 'Friend,' she said, 'consider what you do. My body is not worthy that you should blaspheme Christ about it. Repent, that you may not burn in hell.'

Maria was burnt first, Ursel standing by. Out of pity some one turned her round so that she should not witness her sufferings. But Ursel pleaded very earnestly: 'Let me see my sister's end, for I desire to be a partaker of the glory into which she shall enter.' When Maria was dead her persecutors asked Ursel to recant, thinking, no doubt, that what she had just witnessed would make her fear the fire. But her answer left no room for doubt: 'No; not even to escape

death will I renounce the everlasting treasure.' Then she was asked if she were willing to suffer death by the sword, instead of by fire? She replied, 'My flesh is not too good to be burned for the name of Christ.' One of her aunts was present, and to her Ursel gave a message for her (Ursel's) husband: 'Wish Jan of Beckum good-night for me, and tell him to serve God, to Whom I shall now be an offering.' To a priest standing by she said, 'Because I seek God in heaven I must die a temporal death; if I would acknowledge Him in the bread I might live yet longer.' As she stepped on the pile her foot slipped. 'I think,' she said, 'I am falling off.' 'Stop!' somebody called out to the executioner. 'She will recant!' 'No,' said brave Ursel, 'the block slipped from me. I will not faint in the Word of God, but abide steadfast in Christ!' And so she died, strong in the strength of God.

Luther found a Latin Bible in his monastery, and all the world now knows what a powerful effect that Bible had on his own life, and on the future history of the Christian Church. But very few have heard about the Belgian young lady who found and studied a New Testament in a convent, and its effects on her after life.

This young lady, who is known to history only by her Christian name of Elizabeth, was of a noble

family, who placed her when about twelve years old, for her education, in a convent near Leer, in East Friesland, of which she seems to have subsequently become a nun. While still very young the Prioress of the convent lent her a Latin New Testament, and as she had already studied Latin, she was able to read it. By reading the Word of God she became anxious about spiritual things, and as she read on, more and more of the Divine Light shone into her soul. One result of this study was a dissatisfaction with her convent life, for which no authority could, of course, be found in her New Testament.

After a time the Prioress began to be suspicious that Elizabeth held heretical opinions, a thing not to be tolerated for one moment in a convent. She was therefore sharply questioned about her religious opinions, and her replies not being satisfactory, she was shut up in the convent prison as a punishment. At the end of a year her former companions took pity on her, and persuaded the Prioress that Elizabeth was sorry, with the result that she was released from prison, though still remaining an inmate of the convent. But by this time convent life had become exceedingly distasteful to her, and she determined to leave it on the first opportunity. She dare not return to her parents' house, where no sympathy awaited her, so she determined to cast her whole

care on God, trusting Him to provide for her wants.

There were a number of milkwomen employed in the grounds of the convent, and with one of them Elizabeth became on such friendly terms, that at last she persuaded her to exchange dresses. Early one morning, Elizabeth, dressed as a milk-maid, emerged from the convent, without raising any suspicion as to her identity. She walked into the neighbouring town of Leer, and there, by God's good Providence, she entered the home of a Baptist family. The members of the family soon found out that they had an escaped nun before them, and it is needless to add that their full sympathy went out towards her. They kept her hid in the house for some time, during which they instructed her still further in the Word of God; then, fearing discovery, they conveyed her to the town of Leeuwaarden, and placed her in charge of a sister of the Baptist body.

At that time the Baptists, or Anabaptists, as they were called, were divided into two classes, one holding orthodox and evangelical views of doctrine, the other holding decidedly heretical and often most outrageous opinions, though both sections repudiated infant baptism. Of the former class Elizabeth became a member, together with the woman (named Hadewijk) with whom she now lodged, whose husband had some time

before to flee for his life, in consequence of having publicly given expression to feelings of sympathy with the Protestant martyrs.

Both of these godly women were arrested together on January 15, 1549. The officers who took them found in the house a Latin Testament, and this led them to say to Elizabeth, 'We have now the right person, the teacher. Where is your husband?' They supposed her to be the wife of a well-known Protestant preacher, Menno Simmons. Of course, this was a mistake, for Elizabeth told them, 'I have no husband.' It may as well be mentioned here that her companion in a most marvellous way escaped from prison, finding the doors open, and lived for several years afterwards, dying a natural death. A few days after her arrest Elizabeth was brought before the Council, when she proved herself a right valiant champion of the truth of God. I cannot do better than quote here some extracts from her examination.

Council.—'We say that you are a teacher; you mislead many, and this we have been told concerning you by others. We wish to know who are your friends, and what people you have taught.'

Elizabeth.—'Oh no, gentlemen, excuse me herein, and ask me concerning my faith; that I will most readily confess.'

Council.—'We shall use such severe measures as will make you confess.'

Elizabeth.—'I trust, through the grace of God, that He will keep my tongue, so that I shall not become a traitor, and deliver my brother to death.'

Council.—'Now we see that you are a teacher, for you wish to make yourself like Christ.'

Elizabeth.—'No, gentlemen, God forbid I should, for I esteem myself no better than the sweepings of the house of the Lord.'

Council.—'What, then, do you hold concerning the house of God? Do you not consider our Church to be the house of God?'

Elizabeth.—'No, indeed, gentlemen, for it is written, "Ye are the temples of the living God"; as God says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them."'

Council.—'What do you think of our mass?'

Elizabeth.—'I do not approve of your mass; but whatever agrees with God's Word, that I highly esteem.'

Council.—'What do you think of the most holy sacrament?'

Elizabeth.—'I never in my life read in Holy Scripture of a holy sacrament, but I have read of the Supper of the Lord.'

Council.—'Be silent, for the devil speaks by your mouth. You speak with a proud spirit.'

Elizabeth.—'No, gentlemen, I speak with freedom of spirit.'

Council.—'Do you not expect salvation from baptism?'

Elizabeth.—'No, gentlemen; all the waters in the sea cannot save me; but salvation is in Christ.'

Council.—'Have the priests power to forgive sins?'

Elizabeth.—'No, gentlemen; how can I believe that? I say that Christ is the only Priest, through Whom is the forgiveness of sins.'

Council.—'*You* need neither confession nor sacrament.'

Elizabeth.—'No, gentlemen. I acknowledge, indeed, that I have transgressed the commandment of the Pope, which has been confirmed by the Emperor's edict. But show me any article in which I have transgressed against the Lord my God, and I will say, "Woe is me, poor miserable creature."'

It will thus be seen that the Council gained nothing from the first examination of this young lady. She was remanded back to prison, from which, after an interval, she was again brought before the Council, who now treated her with great severity. 'We have,' they said to her, 'thus far proceeded with mildness; but if you will not confess we will treat you with severity.'

By their order Elizabeth was then tortured. First of all, the executioner being called in, he put thumb-screws on both of her thumbs and forefingers. He then pressed the screws to such a degree that blood gushed out from under her nails. The anguish caused by this cruel torture was such that she cried out :

'Oh ! I cannot bear it ! '

'Confess, and we will ease your pain,' replied her tormentors; to which her only answer was an appeal to the Almighty for help.

'Help, O my God,' she cried, 'Thy poor handmaid, for Thou art a helper in the time of need.'

God heard and answered her prayer in a most remarkable manner, for directly afterwards she said to the Council :

'I feel no longer any pain in my body, as before.'

'Will you not confess ? ' demanded the Council.

'No, gentlemen,' was her brief but courageous reply. They then tortured her feet, by placing two iron screws on each ankle. The result of this was that she fainted. The Council thought she had died under the torture, but presently she recovered, and said, 'I am alive, and not dead.' Then they released her from her tortures.

Council.—'Will you recant all the things you have before confessed ? '

Elizabeth.—'No, indeed, gentlemen; but I will seal them with my blood.'

And she did as she promised. On March 27, 1549, she was condemned to death, and drowned in a sack. 'And thus,' says an old Dutch writer, 'she offered up her body a sacrifice to God.'

Amongst the faithful women of the Netherlands who loved God's truth more than their own lives, an honoured place must be given to Lysken Dirks, wife of Jeronimus Segerson. Both husband and wife were arrested together in 1551, at Antwerp. They were both Baptists.

Lysken Dirks and her husband had no mercy shown to them. The judges who tried her husband told him that 'his wife is the greatest heretic there is in the town.' They were both young, and, with a possibly long life before them, they gave up all for the Saviour's sake. The husband, suffered greatly by being tortured; yet after it all he wrote to his wife: 'I have as great gladness, comfort, and rejoicing as I ever had; yea, such gladness as I cannot speak or write, or had thought could be experienced in a prison, for scarcely can I sleep by night or day for rejoicing.' In another letter he described to his wife how he had been tortured.

'I likewise inform you, my beloved, that they tortured me severely . . . but the Lord was

mightier (Who kept my mouth) than all their torments. To the Lord be endless praise and honour, who forsaketh not His own. They got no names from me, but one or two which they read to me out of a letter. I told them these, to hear what they would say. But they asked me if I was mocking them, and urged me still more, and said that I should name the women, and others too, or they would torture me till the next morning, *and would stretch me a foot longer than I was.* They told Gileyn that he should rack me. His man did it, *while Gileyn poured water into my mouth until I was full.* . . . But they obtained nothing more, praised and adored be the Lord. When they loosed me, they had, two or three together, to raise me from the bench to dress me; indeed, it had not been possible to have borne the pain without help from the Lord. They told me I must consider of it, and become a good member of the Roman Church, and say all I knew, or they would know still better how to deal with me. But I replied thereto that I had not erred, and would much rather die than renounce my faith. They then said that they should come again. But they can do no more than the Lord permits them.

'Eternal honour to the Lord, who hath thus far made us meet, and will yet make us meet,

to be children of His kingdom. My beloved wife, I commend you to the Lord, and to the Word of His grace.'

Lysken received several letters from her husband during their joint imprisonment, and seems to have been greatly consoled by them. Her letters in reply, which are printed below, show how deep her affection was to him; but at the same time they show that her greatest anxiety was that he might stand firm in the faith, and be thankful that to him also had been granted the honour of suffering for Christ's sake. Jeronimus was also deeply attached to his wife. 'I could,' he wrote to her, 'even wish that I might for your sake abide a whole year on bread and water; yea, and then die ten times over, that you may be released. Oh! could I help you by my tears and by my blood, how willingly would I suffer for you! But my suffering cannot help you.'

While she was in prison Lysken was frequently visited by monks and priests, anxious to pervert her. She told them plainly that they were ever learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth, and that they were but sent by Satan to torment and destroy her soul. When before her judges she showed no signs of fear. 'Ye are now judges,' she said to them; 'but the time will come when ye will wish that ye had been keepers of sheep, for there is a Judge and Lord

Who is above all : He shall in His own time judge you.' While they were taking her from the court back to prison she spoke frequently to the people who crowded round her. 'Know,' she said to them, 'that I do not suffer for robbery, or murder, or any kind of wickedness, but solely for the incorruptible Word of God.' As they passed a Romish church on the way, she cried out : 'O thou den of murderers, how many souls are murdered in thee!' For a time after her condemnation her friends were allowed to visit her in prison. The account of her last hours on earth, as given by Van Braght, is deeply interesting :—

'Our friends,' he writes, 'conversed a little with her, and said : "It is well that you suffer only for well-doing, and not for any wicked works" ; but she was constrained not to notice them, on account of the other people that were then in the prison. Lysken spoke boldly and piously to the people, and sang a beautiful hymn, so that they were astonished. Two monks then came to tempt her, and they three were shut up together in a room. Lysken would in no wise listen unto them. The chamber door, at which many persons were standing, being once opened, Lysken came to the door, saying to the monks, "Go, till you are sent for ; I will give no ear to you. Had I been satisfied with your leaven,

I should not have come here." She was then again shut up with them in the room. Thus these wandering spirits, or stars, came with their false and poisonous venom ; but Lysken (God be praised !) was not affrighted. In good spirits she raised a hymn, and sang in the presence of the monks. One of the friends who was present said, "Sister, strive manfully!" When they heard that they were quite enraged, and said, "There is another of her people encouraging her, who deserves burning more than she." They then departed in wrath, for their voice was strange, and was not heard there.

'Lysken was now shut up in the chamber alone, fronting the street where she was accustomed to sit. No one was permitted to come to her, but they who had the keys. When the monks came into the street to go away, some of the friends who were there asked the monks, "Will she not turn?" They replied, "No ; for there is one of her people there whom she preferred hearing."

'As it now began to draw towards evening, the Lord graciously ordered it that one of the friends came to the place where Lysken sat, and spoke a long time with her. The people in the street beginning to hear, they all looked towards the place where the friend was. Some who were near him were troubled, and called to him to go

away. He then said, "I must first take leave of her"; and thereupon said to her, "Stand up, sister; show yourself; look through the window." This she immediately did, and as she looked out upon the people standing in the street, there were among them some friends who called out, saying, "Dear sister, strive piously, for the crown of life is set before you." . . .

'On Saturday morning we rose early, some before day, some with the daylight, to see the nuptials which we thought would then be celebrated; but the crafty murderers outran us. We had slept too long, for they had finished their murderous work between three and four o'clock. They had taken that sheep to the Scheldt, and had put her into a sack, and drowned her before the people arrived, so that few persons saw it. She went courageously to death, and spoke bravely: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Thus she was delivered up, and it came to pass to the honour of the Lord that, by the grace of God, many were moved thereby.'

Lysken's husband had been martyred before her. Brandt states that her martyrdom was delayed until the birth of her child. While in prison Lysken wrote several letters to her husband and friends. The first of these, which we reprint, is addressed to her husband, to whom she wrote:

'Grace and peace be with us both from God

the Father. The love of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us, to the perfect strengthening, comfort, joy, and salvation of our souls.

'My beloved husband in the Lord, understand that at first the time seemed exceedingly long to me, because I was not accustomed to imprisonment, and I heard nothing but temptations to leave the Lord. They said, What reason had I to meddle with the Scripture? I had better mind my sewing. "It seems," said they, "that you will follow the Apostles; what are the signs that you show? They spake with divers tongues, after they had received the Holy Ghost. Where is the tongue that you have received from the Holy Spirit?" But it is enough for us that we are become believers through their words. John relates that Christ thus spake: "I pray not alone for them, but for those also which shall believe on Me through their word." Herewith I commend you unto the Lord. The grace of God be with us always.

'Praised be God the Father, Who hath had, and hath shown such love to us, that He hath given His dear Son for us. He will bestow upon us such love, such joy, such wisdom, and such a steadfast mind, through Christ, and by the might of the Holy Ghost, that we may stand firm against all devouring beasts; against dragons

and serpents, and against all the gates of hell, now so sutble to catch and deceive, destroy and seduce our souls. We ought therefore humbly to pray the Lord, day and night, without ceasing, for the devourer goeth round about us, seeking whom he may devour; and we are not ignorant of his devices. But, although they are very subtle, the Lord's hand is not shortened towards those that love Him, and do His will; "for the eyes of the Lord are upon those that love Him, and His ears are open unto their prayer; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." It is likewise spoken by the Holy Ghost: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe Him not, yet He abideth faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. Being then encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so cleave to us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, and look to Jesus the finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame"; not threatening when He suffered for our sins, and the salvation of our souls.

'Thus may we suffer, my best beloved in the Lord, to the praise of God, and the comfort of all dear friends. I desire that Christ crucified

may be our everlasting joy and strength. I confide in the Lord, Who only is wise, and has given His wisdom to those alone who are simple-hearted, guileless, and outcasts from the world, that He will comfort us until the time of our travail arrive.[1]

'My dear husband in the Lord, whom I married before God and His people, but with whom they say I have lived in adultery, because I was not married in Baal; the Lord saith: "Rejoice, when men shall say all manner of evil against you; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven."

'Understand that I wept much because you were dejected on my account; and because you had heard that I had repeatedly wished you to depart from Assuerus, and that you had not done so. Be at rest concerning it, my dearly beloved in the Lord. Had it not been the Lord's pleasure, it would not have taken place; the will of the Lord must be done, to the salvation of both our souls. He suffers us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear. Therefore be comforted, my dearly beloved in the Lord; rejoice yourself in the Lord, even as before, praising and thanking Him that He hath chosen us, and counted us worthy to lie so long in bonds

[1] Her husband was also in prison when this letter was written, and both suffered martyrdom for the truth.

for His Name's sake. He knows what He hath purposed by this. Although the children of Israel continued long in the wilderness, yet, had they been obedient to the voice of the Lord, they would have entered into the Promised Land with Caleb and Joshua. So we are now, here in the wilderness, among these ravenous beasts, that spread out their nets daily to take us therein ; but the Lord is very mighty, Who forsaketh not His own, that put their trust in Him. He preserves them from all evil ; yea, as the apple of His eye. Let us then be at rest in Him, and take up our cross with joy and patience, and expect with firm assurance the fulfilment of the promises He has given us, nothing doubting (for He is faithful that hath promised) that we shall be crowned on the hill of Zion, and adorned with palms, and follow the Lamb. I pray you, my beloved in the Lord, be of good cheer in the Lord, with all dear friends, and pray to the Lord for me. Amen.'

The next letter was, apparently, addressed to several friends of the Protestant cause, including her husband. Probably they were all in prison suffering for their religion at the time. She wrote :—

'The grace, peace, joy, and love which Jesus left His disciples ; for these I pray, with an importunate heart, that He will give to us such

love, a mind so resolute, that we may be found meet to receive the precious promises which He hath given us, if we continue steadfast unto the end. To that same Saviour be praise and honour from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

'I cannot fully thank nor praise the Lord on account of the great mercy, and unfathomable compassion, and great love which He has shown towards us, that we should be His sons and daughters if we overcome as He has overcome. Oh! we may indeed rightly say that genuine faith is the evidence of things not seen, and works by love; it will bring us to glory if indeed we suffer with Him. Let us observe, dear friends in the Lord, what great love worldly people have for each other. There are those in prison (we have heard it said) who rejoice if they may but go to the rack for the sake of those they love, since they then would be more closely united to each other in spirit, although they might not in person come together. Hear then, my beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord; if the world have such love, oh! what love ought not we to have who wait for such glorious promises! I have before my eyes a beautiful resemblance in a bride, how she ornaments herself to please the bridegroom of this world. Oh! how ought we then to adorn ourselves to please our Bridegroom! Oh! may we be equipped, as were the five wise virgins

who had oil in their lamps, in order to meet our Bridegroom, that we may hear that delightful voice, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom of the Father."

'I beseech the Lord, night and day, that He will give us such an ardent love that we may not regard whatever torments they may inflict on us; yea, that we may say with the prophet David, "I fear not, whatever men may do unto me." This our suffering, which is light and temporary, is not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Since then the will of the Lord is that, with Daniel, I should lie long in the lions' den, and await howling and ravening wolves and lions, and the old serpent which was from the beginning and shall be to the end, I entreat all my dear brethren and sisters that they forget me not in their prayers. I will likewise cheerfully remember them according to my ability. Oh! my dear friends, how can I sufficiently thank my Heavenly Father, that He hath thought it meet for me, a poor sheep, to lie so long in bonds for His Name's sake! Night and day do I pray to the Lord, that this my trial may prove to my soul's salvation, to the praise of the Lord, and to the edification of my dear brethren and sisters. Amen.

'Nicolaes, from the sugar-refining house, brought two priests here to instruct me, whom,

by the grace of God, I answered. They told me that they were much grieved that I held such opinions, for they could not consider it to be faith, but only opinion, seeing that we did not hold what the Christian Congregation or Church directs. But I told them in reply, "We desire to do and believe only what the Church of Christ directs; but we will have nothing to do with Baal's temple, or other temples that are made with hands, after the doctrines and commandments of men, and not after Christ. With these we will have nothing to do, for Stephen saith that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," for he said that he saw "heaven opened, and Christ seated on the right hand of His Almighty Father." And Paul saith that we are the temple of the Living God; if we do His will, He will dwell in us, and walk in us. They said that they were the sent, and were those who sit in Moses' seat. I then answered them, that to them then belonged the woe recorded in Matthew xxiii. They asked me if I meant to say that he who had taught me these things was sent of God? I said, "Yes, indeed; I know assuredly that he is sent of God." They then asked if I knew what a teacher must be? I replied, "A teacher must be the husband of one wife, blameless, having obedient children, no drunkard, not given to wine, not incontinent,"

They then answered, "If we do wrong, it will fall upon our own heads; the Lord is merciful." I then asked them if they would sin because of the mercy of God, and said that it was written that we should not add sin to sin, and that we should not say the Lord is merciful. We spoke much more, which it would be too long to write. I told them that they were ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They said that Christ had spoken to His Apostles, "To you it is given to understand, but to others in parables." I said that they who rightly understand, to them it is now also given. At last they crossed themselves most zealously, and said that I should know it well when I stood before the judgment seat. "That will be so indeed," I said; "we shall sit there as judges, to judge this disobedient, adulterous generation." With this they went away. I told them that they came from Satan to torment and destroy my soul.

'Once more I wish, for my dear husband in the Lord, and for myself, Christ crucified, our unfading joy, and a love that passeth not away. Amen.

'Know, my dear husband in the Lord, when I read that you were so happy in the Lord, I could not finish the letter. I was constrained to entreat the Lord that He would give me likewise the same joy, and preserve it to the end, that we

might present the sacrifice of our bodies with rejoicing, to the glory of our Father Who is in heaven, and the edification of all dear brethren and sisters. Herewith I commend you to the Lord, and to the Word of His grace. Know that I thank you heartily for the letter which you wrote to me. The grace of the Lord be with us always.'

Lysken wrote one more letter to her husband before his martyrdom. It was as follows :—

'The abundant grace of God be ever with us both ; the love of the Son, and His inscrutable mercy, and the joy of the Holy Ghost be with us eternally. Amen. To Him Who hath begotten us again from the dead, be glory from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

'I desire Christ crucified to be with us both, the defender and guardian of our souls. May He preserve us in all righteousness, holiness, and truth to the end. He will keep us as His sons and daughters, if we maintain our devotedness to Him to the end ; yea, as the apple of His eye. Let us, therefore, confide in Him, and He will never forsake us ; but will keep us, as He hath kept His own from the beginning of the world, and will not let any temptation overtake us, but such as are common to man.

'The Lord is faithful, saith Paul, Who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, Who hath counted us worthy to suffer for His name, a suffering short and transitory, through the precious promises which He hath given us, and all who remain steadfast to His truth. In a few things we may suffer here ; but with many shall we be rewarded.

'My dear beloved husband in the Lord, you have partly passed through your trial, wherein you have remained steadfast. The Lord be for ever praised and glorified for His great mercy. I beseech the Lord with tears, that He will also make you meet to suffer for His Name's sake ; they are all chosen sheep that He hath chosen thereto, for He hath redeemed them from among men, to be first-fruits unto God. Yea, we know, as Paul saith, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him ; if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." Therefore let us not despise the chastening of the Lord ; "For whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," as Paul relates. Herewith I commend you to the Lord, and to the Word of His grace and glory, whereby He will glorify us, if we remain therein to the end. The grace of the Lord be with us.'

Of the majority of the women martyrs of the Reformation in the Netherlands, little or nothing is now known on earth, though we doubt not that

a full record of every one of them is kept in heaven. As to most of them, their very names are forgotten, while of others some particulars are recorded; but not many. In but few cases are lengthy accounts known to exist. Yet even where the facts available are but few, many interesting features distinguish each case from others, though all are alike in persecution and death.

In 1553, a young woman, a native of Westphalia, was burnt to death at Amsterdam. Her name was Felistis Jans. She was charged with having joined the Anabaptists, and attended their assemblies; with separating herself from the obedience and faith of the Church of Rome, judging erroneously of the sacrament of the altar, seducing certain persons from their obedience to the Papal communion; and with obstinately adhering to her opinions, refusing to give them up. She was cruelly tortured on the rack, but no torment, however painful, could induce her to deny her Lord and Saviour. She was kept in prison for a long time, and having secured the favour of her jailer's wife she was employed in ordinary household duties. One day this woman wished something to be carried out of the prison; but as there was no one else available, Felistis said to her: 'Shall I do it?' 'Would you run away?' asked the anxious wife in reply. 'No,'

said Felistis. But on further consideration she thought it probable that if she did thus go out of prison on this errand the temptation to run away might prove too strong for her, and then the jailer's wife, who had been kind to her, would get into trouble ; so she decided to remain. By so acting she lost her own life. On January 16, 1553, Felistis Jans was taken out of prison to be burnt. An old writer tells us that 'her dress was clean, and a white apron before her, as if she was desirous of showing, by her outward dress, how purely and uprightly a Christian maiden ought internally to be adorned, in order to please her beloved and heavenly Bridegroom, Christ Jesus. Thus did she present her offering. She is numbered among the throng of martyrs, holy and acceptable to God.'

Bodily infirmity in Protestants never seems to have moved the sympathies of their persecutors in the sixteenth century. In Friesland there lived, in the year 1553, a youth named Tys, who was very lame, and a young woman named Berentge, so infirm that she was rarely able to leave her bed. They were both earnest and devout Christians, rejecting the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome. The enemies of the Gospel arrested them both, and committed them to the same prison, where they seem to have had

opportunities of mutual intercourse, which they utilised in encouraging each other to stand firm in the truth. At last they were both sentenced to death by drowning. Tys was very indignant when he learnt the kind of death assigned to them. 'They drown cats and dogs!' he exclaimed, forgetting, no doubt, for the moment that it was a special honour to be thus counted 'the off-scouring of all things.'

Both Tys and Berentge begged that they might be executed publicly at the gallows, hoping thus to have an opportunity of then testifying to their faith in the sight of the world. But this favour was refused, the Romish authorities, no doubt, fearing the effect of the public testimony of these two crippled Christians. So Tys and Berentge were taken from their sleep at the hour of mid-night, their mouths gagged, lest any one by chance should hear them while being removed to the canal near by. There they were put together into one sack, taken out in a flat-bottomed boat, and thrown into the canal. They were dragged along the canal by the boat until they were dead. Braght refers to them as 'bright lights and pious witnesses of Christ,' and justly adds that their execution was a 'murder, committed in darkness.' They were drowned at Leeuwaarden.

In the following year, 1554, a godly wife and

mother, named Levina, was arrested at Ghent. She had six children, all living at the time of her arrest. Every mother who reads these lines must realise how hard it was for Levina, when she had to choose between life with her children and denial of God's truth on the one hand, and certain death for Christ's sake on the other. By God's grace she was enabled to decide aright. A young man named David was executed with her. When a priest had said to him, 'My friend, you have greatly erred in having so readily confessed your faith; for it will cost you your life,' David courageously replied, 'I am ready, for the Name of Christ, to shed my blood, were it even here in this place. God is my salvation; He will keep and preserve me from all evil.' To his judges David said, 'Never will any one be able to show, by Scripture, that the faith for which I must now die is heresy.' At the stake he spoke words of comfort and cheer to Levina. 'Rejoice, dear sister,' he exclaimed, 'for what we here suffer is not to be compared with that eternal joy which we anticipate.' They were both strangled, and then burnt.

During the persecutions in the Low Countries in the sixteenth century, the priests and monks were never tired of urging the magistrates to take more severe measures against the Protestants.

Much as these magistrates did in this direction, it was never sufficient to satisfy their love for persecution. In Lille, in 1555, the Dominican monks preached from the pulpits of the churches against the magistrates for their negligence in this direction. They had, said these monks, been slack in enforcing the laws against heretics, and had connived at their assemblies and conventicles, with the result that Protestantism was increasing daily. The Dominicans did not preach in vain. The magistrates set to work to please the priests by arresting the leader of the Protestants in the town, Robert Oguier, together with his wife and their two sons, Baldwin and Martin, all of whom suffered the death of martyrs. I will briefly relate here the story of the last days of this Christian family. When brought before the judges the father was asked why he did not go to mass, and why he held conventicles in his house, contrary to the law? He answered:

'I do not go to mass, because the precious Blood of the Son of God, and His oblation of Himself, is thereby rendered void and of none effect; for Christ did, by one only Sacrifice, perfect for ever those that are sanctified. The Apostle mentions only one oblation, Hebrews x. 14. We read of no mass in the Holy Scriptures, but only of the Lord's Supper. The mass is a human invention! And Christ tells us in Matt. xv. 9, "In vain do

they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." I own likewise that I have kept assemblies, or meetings of good and godly persons; but such meetings were not prejudicial to the Government by any means, but rather promoted the honour and glory of our Saviour. I know very well that these were forbidden, but I know at the same time that Christ commanded them; so that if I obeyed my Prince I must disobey God. I will therefore rather obey the Lord than men.'

One of the magistrates asked the father, 'What do you do at your meetings?' whereupon his son Baldwin, also a prisoner, answered for him, after first asking leave to do so, which was granted.

'When we are there come together in the name of the Lord,' said Baldwin, 'to hear His Holy Word, we all fall down at once upon our knees to the ground, and confess in humility of heart our sins before the Divine Majesty. Then we all join in the same prayer, to wit, that God's Word may be purely preached to us, and rightly understood by us. We also pray for our Sovereign Lord the Emperor, and for all his Council, that the Commonwealth may be governed with peace, and to the glory of God. And you, my Lords, are not forgotten by us, as our immediate governors; we likewise pray for you and this whole city, that He would support you in what is good and just.

Do you, therefore, still believe that our meeting together for these purposes can be so criminal as has been represented to you? As a proof, I am ready, if you please, my Lords, to recite those very prayers before you.'

The youth's description of the Protestant prayer-meetings excited the interest of several of his judges, and he was asked to recite the prayers to which he had referred. He at once knelt down before the court, and prayed with such fervency and zeal that even his judges shed tears. When he had concluded his prayer Baldwin rose from his knees, and turning to the judges said, 'These are the things that pass in our conventicles.' But the simple eloquence of the youth was of no avail with the judges, who dreaded most of all the vengeance of the monks and priests, if they showed mercy to the prisoners. The court adjourned without giving sentence, and father and son were sent back to prison, where they were placed upon the rack and cruelly tortured. Four or five days later they were sentenced to be burnt alive.

The last scene was a memorable one. As they were being led to execution the monks tied a crucifix on the hands of the father, but at once young Baldwin tore it off and threw it away. 'Let not the people be scandalised,' cried the youthful martyr, 'because we desire to worship

no wooden Christ, for we bear about Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, in our hearts, and we feel His Holy Word written on our hearts in golden characters.'

When Baldwin was tied to the stake, he began to sing aloud the sixteenth Psalm. Hearing him thus singing, and happy even under such circumstances, one of the monks cried out angrily :

'Hark how they chant their vile errors, in order to deceive the people.'

Baldwin's instant reply was :

'How dare you say that the Psalms of David are errors ? But this is your ancient practice, to blaspheme the Holy Ghost.'

He then turned to his faithful father, and said : 'Be of good cheer, my father ; it will soon be over.' And then he prayed :

'O God, the Eternal Father, grant that this sacrifice of our bodies may be acceptable in Thy sight, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Son.'

'Villain,' answered one of the monks, 'thou liest ! God is not thy Father ; the devil only is your father.'

Taking no notice of this bigoted interruption, the dying youth lifted his eyes up to heaven, and then, turning them again to his father, he triumphantly exclaimed :

'Behold, my father ! I see the heavens opened, and millions of angels surrounding us, rejoicing for

the confession of the truth which we have made before the world. Let us likewise rejoice for the glory of God, which appears before our eyes.'

It seemed as though the more of a Christian spirit was exhibited by the dying martyrs, the more furious became the monks. One of them, hearing the last address of Baldwin to his father, screamed out :

'I see hell gaping, and as many devils waiting to hurry you to their infernal mansions.'

The father and son were heard talking to each other in the midst of the flames, the son encouraging the father until death ended their sufferings.

Meanwhile the mother and her youngest son, Martin, remained in prison. While there the monks persuaded her, working no doubt on her fears, to recant. But when Martin heard of her fall he was greatly troubled.

'Oh, mother!' he exclaimed, 'what have you done? Have you denied the Son of God, Who redeemed you? What has He done to you, that you should dishonour and injure Him in such a manner? Now is that misfortune fallen upon me which I most dreaded. O, my God! why have I lived to hear that which pierces my heart with grief?'

Her son's grief greatly affected his mother, and

led to her repentance. She burst into tears, and humbly begged God's pardon for her offence.

'O, Lord!' she cried, 'be merciful to me. Hide my misdeeds in the merits of Thy Son. Grant me strength to abide by my first confession, and confirm me in it to the last breath of my life.'

That prayer was answered. Joanna Oguier remained faithful to the last, and sealed her faith with her blood. The next time the monks visited her after her repentance, they were amazed at the reception she gave them.

'Depart, Satans!' she exclaimed; 'get you gone, for you have no more share in me. I will subscribe my first confession, and if I cannot do it with ink, it shall be done with my blood.'

After this, of course, only one fate awaited both mother and son. They were both sentenced to be burnt alive. On their way back from the court to prison, Martin said to his mother:

'My mother, do not forget the honour and the glory which our God confers upon us in conforming us to the image of His Son. Remember those who have walked in His ways, for they have gone no other road than this. Let us then boldly advance, my mother, and follow the Son of God, bearing His reproach, with all His martyrs, and thus shall we enter into the glory of the living God. Doubt not, my mother, that this is the way in which we ought to go; for you know that through much

tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.'

One of the officers, who overheard this noble exhortation, exclaimed in a rage :

'Villain ! we now see that the devil entirely possesses you, soul and body, as he did your father and brother, who are now in hell.'

'My friend,' said Martin quietly, 'your curses are blessings to me, before God and before His angels.'

The mother died as bravely as her noble boy. When he was tied to the stake, and was about to address the people, she cried out to him :

'Speak out, Martin, that they may know we are no heretics.'

Then, turning to those around, she said :

'We are Christians ; and what we are about to suffer is neither for theft nor murder, *but because we will not believe anything besides the Word of God*.'

The mother and youngest son were burnt alive about a week after her husband and eldest son also had suffered in the same way. They formed a noble family.

CHAPTER VIII

WOMEN MARTYRS OF THE NETHERLANDS (*concluded*)

Maeyken de Korte—Soetgen Van den Houte—The Wife of Jan de Swarte—The Maidservant Betken—Anna Van den Hove.

ON May 20, 1559, the Margrave of Antwerp took with him a number of officers, and went in search of a man for whose arrest a handsome reward had been offered. He failed to find the man he wanted, but in the house where he expected to discover him he found six Protestant women. These he took away with him, and placed them all in a dark prison. After a time they were put on their trial on a charge of heresy. Promises of favour were made to them if they would recant, but they all stood firm in their faith. Then threats were used, but these also were equally in vain. Three of them were drowned by night in the prison on June 18. The remaining three were kept in prison until October 11, when one of them was drowned, and

the other two were put to death by the sword, an unusual punishment for women. One of the latter, named Maeyken de Korte, while in prison, wrote the following letter :

'My dear Sister,—Pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be fruitful. Wait for Him in all patience and holiness. He that shall come will come, and bring His reward with Him. He is faithful that hath promised, Who also will do it. It is indeed as I say ; our life is a perpetual conflict upon earth. Know that I am tolerably strong in mind ; the body is pretty well, the Lord be praised. We are regarded as accursed by the world, and always long to be at home in a house not made with hands, but in Heaven itself. We look for new heavens and a new earth, according to His promise, wherein dwelleth righteousness. How must we be prepared for such a glorified state ! I find myself often cast down. I find in myself so many imperfections, and so much that must yet be crucified ; all of which I have to bring before the Lord with a humbled heart, and a trembling, dejected mind, and entreat for mercy, not for justice. I feel that the less I am in myself, the more doth the mighty God work in me, and pour His grace into my heart. Then I weep bitterly, and fall upon my knees, and thank my God, and say, " O my Lord and God ! what am I, a child

of Adam, that Thou shouldest be mindful of me! Thou hast crowned man with glory, and given him dominion over all Thy works. Whence is it that Thou so richly visitest us, and so bountifully openest Thy treasures, and permittest the bright Morning Star to enter and arise in our hearts; and hast called us from this dark night into that unfading light?"

'What shall we, my dear sister, give to Him in return, but a sorrowful and contrite heart, and a broken spirit, with love and great thankfulness? Therein (says David) the Spirit of the Lord delights. Let us love one another fervently, for God is love; and ever exhort each other, that we wax not cold through the deceitfulness of sin; that God may be glorified in us, and that we may be delivered from pride, and deceitful, wicked persons; for all men have not faith. The Lord is faithful, Who will strengthen and preserve us.

'Know that my sisters have been here, and desired to have a word of comfort from me. The Lord hath still maintained the victory. I know not what ails me; they appear to me as strangers. I cannot, cannot rejoice, though I see them. Methinks they are afraid of me. They tried me very much, and sent Balten, a friar, to examine me, and promised him three cowls if he could convert me. He came with fair speeches, but I would not speak to him, for I was at that time

very sick. My sisters then said, "Why do you not speak?" I replied, "I am not at present in the mind; we have often conversed with him, he knows our opinions very well."

'Balten became angry, and launched out in complaints against me; that I had powerfully withstood the Scriptures, and that I expected salvation on unjust grounds, and had no hope. They wept much; but it made no impression on me, whether he spake or was silent. He made all the people leave the room, and let my sisters remain with himself and me. He entreated me earnestly, saying, "My dear Maeyken, have compassion on your poor soul!" I fearlessly replied that I hoped to do so. "Say," said they, "that you are sorry, and that you have erred; that is enough, you need not say more. A note shall immediately be given you under my hand, and I will myself sign it, and both your brothers-in-law. It shall be kept private, and everything possible shall be done for you. Let it be done, my dear sister." I was moved, and said, "You may spare yourself your trouble; your efforts are all in vain. I am not in the mind to say that I am sorry. So sorry am I that, if I had not done it, I would still do it. I desire to remain steadfast, by the help of God. Neither prayers, nor pain, nor death, nor life shall move me. I desire to die therein. Do not trouble me."

'I would like, if it were permitted me, to speak to Laurence Huysmaker, and see all your faces; but I must be patient. To the Lord, and to the Word of His grace, I commend you. Greet Andreas for me; greet Matthews also. I salute you both. Greet Laurence, greet Hans, greet heartily Adrian for me; and Laurence's wife, and Laurence the press-maker's wife, and Hansken's wife.'

During this year of 1559, no fewer than eighteen Protestant women were put to death. This was mainly brought about through the exertions of that cruel persecutor, the Dean of Rosen, who was so zealous in this work that he received the nickname of 'Saul.' But he was unlike Saul in one thing; he never became a 'Paul,' who preached the faith he once persecuted. It is related of this Dean that, although he was an Inquisitor, he used to go about to search for Protestants in the town where he resided accompanied only by a couple of servants. He was one day asked by an officer of justice, 'How is it that you dare venture, so slenderly attended, to apprehend these heretics; whereas I cannot exercise my office but at the peril of my life, though attended with a great many servants, and all of us well armed?' To this question the Dean gave the following noteworthy reply: 'I have nothing to fear, for my business is only to take good people, who bear no arms, nor make any resistance.'

This answer drew from the criminal officer the remark, 'If this be the case, that you take all the good men, and I the bad, we shall fill the prisons bravely between us.'

A year later another godly woman, named Soetgen Van den Houte, gave up her life for her Saviour at Ghent, on November 27, 1560, in company with another woman named Martha, as to whose case no particulars are recorded. As so frequently happened during these bitter persecutions, Soetgen was a widow through the martyrdom of her husband for the same glorious cause. But that which gave her most anxiety was the future of her beloved little children, whom she loved with all a mother's passionate devotion. Yet, much as she loved her little ones, she loved her Saviour more. There has come down to us a letter which she addressed to her children from prison, shortly before her execution. It is very long, but a portion of it may well find its place in these records of the noble women who suffered the loss of all things for their Saviour at the hands of the Papacy. She wrote to them :

'In the name of the Lord.

'Grace, peace, and mercy, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, be to you, my dear children. A loving salutation to you, David, Betgen, and Janneken, written by your mother

in bonds, to put you in mind of the truth, to which I hope to testify by word and by death, by the help of the Almighty, and as an example to you. May the wisdom of the Holy Spirit instruct and strengthen you, that you may be nurtured in the ways of the Lord. Amen.

'Further, my dear children, since it is pleasing to the Lord to take me out of this world, I will leave you a memento, not of silver or gold, for such jewels are perishable. I would fain inscribe a jewel in your heart, were it possible—the word of truth. This I will a little teach you by the Word of the Lord, with my best wishes, according to the small ability I have received of the Lord, and in my simplicity.

'First, I admonish you, my best beloved, to suffer yourselves to be always instructed by those that fear the Lord. Then will you please God, and He will be a Father to you, and not leave you orphans, as long as you are obedient to good counsel and instruction, and fear the Lord. . . .

'My children, be upright in all your dealings, for in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death. The righteous rejoice to do what is just, but they are a terror to evil-doers. Prefer to gain a livelihood by the labour of your hands, to eat your bread with peace. Desire not a trade or concern of great profits. "A little with the fear of God, is better

than great treasure and trouble therewith." "Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife." . . .

'Choose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God, that with them you may obtain a reward. To them all the glorious promises belong, but they must suffer much; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." . . .

'Oh! my dear children, I have written this with tears, admonishing you from love, praying for you with a fervent heart, that, if it were possible, you may be found among that number. When your father was taken from me I did not spare myself, day or night, to bring you up; and my prayer and care continually was for your salvation. Being now in bonds, it has always been my greatest concern that I could not, according to my anxious desire, better provide for you. When I was told that you were conveyed to Oudenarde, and from thence to Bruges, it was a sore stroke to me. I have never had greater sorrow. But when I thought that neither my sorrow nor my solicitude could help you, and that we must be separated from all that is dear to us in this world for the sake of Christ, I left it all to the will of the Lord, still hoping and praying that He in His compassion would preserve you, as He kept Joseph, Moses, and Daniel among the

ungodly. . . . If you follow good instruction it will lead you through all perils, and bring you to your Father's house, where such joy is prepared as ear hath never heard, nor eye seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what joy is prepared for the chosen. But to the elect God hath revealed it by His Spirit.

'To this may you be brought by the word of the Father, through the mercy of the Son, and may the wisdom of the Holy Spirit strengthen you that you may lay hold thereof. Amen.

'David, my dear child, I commend you to the Lord. You are the eldest: learn wisdom, that you may set a good example to your sisters. Beware of bad company, and of playing in the streets with bad boys. Learn diligently to read and write, that you may become wise. Love one another without strife or wrangling. . . .

'Further, my dear children, Betgen and Janneken, my dear lambs, I admonish you in all these things to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord. Obey your uncle and aunt, and likewise your elders, and all who instruct you in virtue. To them whose bread you eat you must be submissive, in whatever is not contrary to God. Be diligent, always encouraging yourselves to do your work, so will you be loved wherever you dwell. . . . I commend you to the Lord, to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the

God of Jacob. May He preserve you to the end of life. Amen.

'My dear children, I leave this as a memorial or testament. If you turn it to profit, you will thereby collect greater treasure than if I had left you great riches, which are perishable, for the wealth of this world may be lost by fire, war, or bad fortune. Therefore he is not wise who sets his heart upon aught that is perishable. We are not certain of one hour's time. We must leave all behind. Therefore be not sorrowful, although what we had is scattered or lost. You must therefore thank the Lord that He preserved it to us until I had brought you up thus far. If you walk in all righteousness the Lord will afford you a sufficiency. Take an example in Tobias. And David says that the righteous shall not suffer want, nor his seed beg their bread. . . .

'I will now say adieu. Adieu, my dear children. Adieu, all my dear friends together.

'My best beloved, although our adversaries tell you that your father and I differ in faith, do not believe it. For he held the truth respecting baptism and the Incarnation of Christ in every point he could comprehend, and was a pious witness of righteousness, and laid down his life for its sake, as an example to you, treading the same path as the Prophets, the Apostles, and Christ Himself. He contended before us with much

tribulation and suffering, and left his children behind him for the sake of Christ. Therefore, be ye followers of him, for there is no other way.'

On March 7, 1563, the Dean of Rontzen, acting on the information of a spy, arrested at Hallewin a large number of men and women, including Jan de Swarte, Klaesken his wife, with their four sons. The father had acted as Protestant minister in several towns, and had frequently to move from place to place to escape capture. He earned his living by weaving cloth, and was of a generous and hospitable disposition, according to his means, delighting especially in helping his poorer Protestant brethren. When he was arrested by the Inquisitor his two youngest sons were not at home. Some friendly neighbours who had witnessed the arrest of their father, mother, and brothers, hurried off to give them warning, so that they might escape in time. But instead of being afraid, one of them bravely said to the other, 'Let us not run away, but die with father and mother.'

As they came towards their home they met their father, mother, and brothers in the custody of the officers of the Inquisition. 'Children,' said the father to them, 'will you go with me to the New Jerusalem?' 'Yes, father, we will,' was the prompt and courageous answer, and so they were

all led off together to prison at Ryssel. The father was placed in a dungeon ironically called 'Paradise.' It was so small that he could neither stand upright in it nor lie down at full length. No records of the trial of this faithful Christian family have come down to us. We only know that the parents, with their four sons, were condemned to death by fire. The father and one of his sons was first burnt alive; and a few days later the mother, with her three remaining sons, suffered the same fate. They were indeed a noble family of martyrs, however lowly in the estimation of the world.

Almost every rank in life is included in the noble roll of women Protestant martyrs. All alike were animated by the same spirit, and proved to the world that the grace of God can enable even the weakest of the weak to become strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. One of these was a domestic servant named Betken, in the employment of a goldsmith of Breda, named Peter Van Kulen. Her master was himself a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and held office as deacon to a congregation of Protestants meeting secretly in his house. Though brave, Peter was not a man to risk his life recklessly. He was very careful of his speech, hoping thus to escape the persecution which in those dangerous days awaited all who

were known to be Protestants. But at length the time came when, notwithstanding all his care, he became an object of suspicion to the priests, with the result that he was arrested on a charge of heresy, cast into prison, and placed in irons. While there he had his food brought to him, day by day, by his faithful servant Betken. Like her employer, she also loved the truth of God, and availed herself of the opportunities her daily visits gave her for the purpose of exhorting him to remain firm in the profession of his faith. These visits continued for more than nine months, and then poor Betken herself became an object of suspicion, and as a result was imprisoned on a charge of heresy. Instead of being sorry for this, she rejoiced, accounting herself a happy woman in being called to suffer for righteousness' sake. Peter Van Kulen was tortured on the rack, but Betken fortunately escaped from this punishment in a very remarkable way. She was actually about to be placed on the rack when she made an earnest appeal for mercy.

'My masters,' she said, 'wherefore will you put me to this torture, seeing I have no way offended you? Is it for my faith's sake? You need not torment me for that; for as I was never ashamed to make a confession thereof, no more will I be ashamed now when I am before you. I will freely disclose to you my mind therein. But, alas!

masters, if it be so that I must suffer this pain, then give me leave first to call upon God.'

They granted her leave, and then she poured forth her whole soul in such earnest pleadings with God, that one of the commissioners was so overcome with terror that he actually swooned. This accident led to her escape from torture, though not from death.

Peter and Betken both made confessions of their faith before their judges, but neither arguments nor threats could induce them to recant. They were therefore both sentenced to death. The execution took place on May 29, 1568, in the presence of a vast multitude, not of enemies only, but also of friends. For sympathising Protestants in those dangerous days frequently attended the executions of their co-religionists for the purpose of afterwards testifying that they had not recanted, but had been supported by Divine grace to the last. In this way false rumours, set abroad by the priests, were defeated.

On this occasion many in the crowd pressed forward and embraced the martyrs, praising God for the great courage they displayed. Some cried out aloud, 'Fight manfully, for the crown is prepared for you.' Betken addressed the crowd, exhorting them to be always obedient to God's Word, and not to fear those who kill the body, but had not power to kill the soul. 'As for me,'

she joyfully exclaimed, 'I am now going to meet my glorious spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Both the martyrs then knelt down and prayed together with great earnestness. Their persecutors evidently thought Betken more guilty than her master, for he was allowed the privilege of being strangled first, and afterwards burnt, while she was burnt alive. 'She encouraged her master,' says Brandt, 'as long as he was capable of understanding her, and afterwards she was observed by the people, who were astonished at her invincible courage, magnifying the name of God in the midst of the flames.'

Towards the close of the sixteenth century there were dwelling in Brussels two sisters named Rampaerts, who, being in moderately comfortable circumstances, were able to employ a servant, whose name was Anna Van den Hove, about forty years of age. The sisters were thrown into prison, on suspicion of being in favour of the Reformed religion. It is probable that the suspicion was well founded; but whether it was so or not, it is certain that while in prison they were both frightened by the priests into begging pardon for their offences, and in this way obtained their liberty again, and then they went to mass like other Roman Catholics.

But their servant Anna was made of different metal, for she had the courage of her convictions,

together with the grace and strength which God alone can give. She does not appear to have been arrested until after the return of her mistresses from prison, when the Jesuits—those great enemies of religious liberty—denounced her to the authorities. When committed to prison she modestly declared to those who questioned her that, being a woman of such an humble condition of life, she could not reasonably be suspected of stirring up sedition. She believed that she held true opinions on religious matters; but if not, it was her misfortune, and ought not to be imputed to her, and for such an offence she ought not to be punished by men, but be left to the judgment of God. The Archduke Albert of Austria was one of her judges, and being asked his opinion of the case, said that the edicts and placards against heretics ought to be carried out, and as a result of this advice the Council sentenced her to be buried alive. The Jesuits after this came to her in prison, and invited her to join the Church of Rome, and thus save her life. But Anna was not to be moved. 'When,' writes the historian Motley, 'King Henry IV. was summoned to renounce that same Huguenot faith of which he was the political embodiment and the military champion, the candid man answered by the simple demand to be instructed. When the proper moment came, the instruction was accomplished by an archbishop

with the rapidity of magic. Half an hour undid the work of half a lifetime. Thus expeditiously could religious conversion be effected when an earthly crown was its guerdon.

'The poor serving-maid was less open to conviction. In her simple faith she too talked of a crown, and saw it descending from heaven on her poor forlorn head as the reward, not of apostasy, but of steadfastness. She asked her tormentors how they could expect her to abandon her religion through fear of death. She had read her Bible every day, she said, and had found nothing there of the Pope or purgatory, masses, invocation of saints, or the absolution of sins except through the blood of the Blessed Redeemer. She interfered with no one who thought differently; she quarrelled with no one's religious belief. She had prayed for enlightenment from Him, if she were in error, and the result was that she felt strengthened in her simplicity, and resolved to do nothing against her conscience. Rather than add this sin to the manifold ones committed by her, she preferred to die the death.'

There was no mercy for this humble child of God, whose only offence was faithfulness to His written Word. And so, on a summer's morning in the year 1596, Anna Van den Hove was led out to die in a hayfield outside of Brussels. Two Jesuit priests walked beside her, and, as they

walked, told her she was the devil's own carrion, and urged her to repent or she would soon be in a state of eternal damnation. They failed in their efforts. Anna told them that, like Stephen of old, she saw the heavens opened, and angels descending to carry her away to the land of eternal bliss. When they came to the place where the execution was to take place they found the grave was already dug. She was ordered to descend into it. Even then, at the last moment, the Jesuits hoped she would become an apostate. The executioner first covered her with earth up to her waist, and then, as a last chance, the priests once more asked her to give up her alleged errors. Without hesitation she refused. Then the earth was filled in over her, the hangman jumped upon her grave to flatten it down, and that was the last seen on earth of Anna Van den Hove.

'Of all the religious murders done in that hideous century in the Netherlands,' says Motley, 'the burial of the Antwerp serving-maid was the last and the worst. The worst, because it was a cynical and deliberate attempt to revive the demon whose thirst for blood had been at last allayed, and who had sunk into repose. And it was a spasmodic revival only, for, in the provinces at least, that demon had finished his work.'

Anna Van den Hove was the last Protestant martyr in the Netherlands.

CHAPTER IX

WOMEN MARTYRS OF SPAIN

The Spanish Inquisition—Donna Eleonora de Vibero—Leanor de Cisneros—Donna Isabella de Baena—Maria de Virves—Maria de Cornel—Maria de Bohorques—Maria Gomez—Her Three Daughters burnt alive with Their Mother—A Father denounces his Three Daughters to the Inquisition—They are burnt alive by their Father.

THE Spanish Inquisition existed, and was actively at work, for several centuries before the Reformation ; but when Protestantism entered Spain it became more active than ever. It is often asserted by modern Roman Catholic controversialists that the Spanish Inquisition was merely a State tribunal, and that their Church is not responsible for its horrible cruelties and crimes. The assertion, however, is false. A modern Romish historian, Dr. Ludwig Pastor, in his *History of the Popes*, vol. iv. p. 403 (written with the special blessing of Pope Leo XIII.), frankly remarks : 'The members of the Council [of the Inquisition] have often been spoken of as mere State officials ; this, however, is a mistake.

They were State officials, and, as such, derived their temporal jurisdiction from the King; but in their primary ecclesiastical capacity they had no authority until it was imparted to them by the Papal Delegate. The Grand Inquisitor, nominated by the King, always received his ecclesiastical jurisdiction from an Apostolic Brief, issued by the Pope.' The history of this Inquisition is a history of torture, murder, and blood. Llorente, who wrote *The History of the Inquisition of Spain*, from the original documents of the Inquisition itself, of which at one time he was Secretary, tells us that from 1481 to 1620, it sent no fewer than 31,912 persons to the flames, and condemned to severe penances (the misery of which no words can adequately describe) 291,450 persons. In the early days of the Reformation Protestantism found an entrance into Spain, first of all by the circulation of several of Luther's tracts, but in the Latin language, and therefore of no direct service except amongst the learned. This was in the year 1519; but in the following year Luther's famous *Commentary on the Galatians* was translated into Spanish, printed at Antwerp, and circulated in Spain. Several years later Juan Valdes was the first person who became an active propagandist of Protestantism in Spain. This was, probably, about the year 1537. Soon afterwards the persecutions of the Inquisition

commenced, and ere long the martyrs' fires were lit to consume the hated Reformers.

The first great auto-da-fé, as they were termed, for the burning of Protestants, took place at Valladolid on May 21, 1559, in the presence of members of the royal family, many of the grandees of Spain, and an immense concourse of people. Fourteen persons were burnt alive, all men; but the dead body of a woman, Donna Eleonora de Vibero, who had been buried some time before, and had been exhumed for the occasion, was also cast into the flames. After her death it was discovered that she had held Lutheran opinions, and therefore, to gratify the malice of the Inquisitors, her remains were now cremated, and the house in which she lived was razed to the ground. After that, her son, Dr. Cazalla, a noble witness for the truth, was brought out and burnt alive. Another martyr burnt alive on this occasion was an advocate named Antonio Herezuelo. His young wife, Leanor de Cisneros, aged twenty-two, was arrested at the same time as her husband. While in prison she was not allowed to see him. Under the terrors of that awful Inquisition the young wife gave way for a time, and renounced with her hand the faith she believed in her heart. On the dread day of the auto-da-fé she appeared at the place of execution in the garb of a penitent. Her husband had

suffered torture while in prison, and had shown no fear of death, not even when at the stake. But he was sadly moved when he looked round and saw his wife amongst the penitents who had recanted; 'and the look which he gave,' says Dr. M'Crie, '(for he could not speak) as he passed her to go to the place of execution, seemed to say, "*This* is hard to bear!"'

Leanor saw her husband die, and the sight filled her with remorse for her unfaithfulness, as well as sorrow for her loss. The parting look of her husband seemed to be ever present with her. In her heart she had never ceased to believe in and love the Reformed faith, and now she determined to break her bonds asunder. She had been ordered by the Inquisitor to do certain acts of public penance, and these she refused to carry out. The result of her resolution was that she was thrown into a secret prison, where she was kept for eight weary years. Every effort was made to induce her to recant again, but she now remained true and firm in her loyalty to Jesus; nothing could persuade her to give way. At last her enemies lost patience, and at another auto-da-fé, which was held at Valladolid on September 26, 1568, the now brave young widow was brought forth to die. A Papal writer, who was present, recorded that 'nothing could move the impenetrable heart of that obstinate woman.'

About four months after the first auto-da-fé at Valladolid, another was celebrated at Seville on September 24, 1559. On this occasion no fewer than four ladies of position, three of them related to the highest ranks of the nobility, laid down their lives for the Gospel. Of one of these, named Donna Isabella de Baena, all we know is that she was rich, that she had given the use of her house as a place of worship for the Lutherans, and that, as a polluted thing, the building was razed to the ground. The other three were young—viz., Maria de Virves, Maria de Cornel, and Maria de Bohorques. The two first of these were sisters, and with them was burnt at the same time their brother, Dr. Juan Gonzalez, a priest who had embraced the Lutheran religion. He was most cruelly tortured, and at length was sentenced to be burnt alive. When he met his two sisters at the stake, he earnestly exhorted them to die in the faith of the Gospel. At the last moment the brother and the two sisters joined together, while the fire raged around them, in chanting the 109th Psalm: 'Hold not Thy peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.' 'Clouds of smoke,' writes Senor Don A. de Castro, 'for a time rendered them invisible, but when these were dispersed the eye of the spectator could discern, on the ground, three heaps of bones and ashes,

AN AUTO-DA-FÉ IN SPAIN.

(*From an Old Print.*)

the remains of Licenciate Gonzalez and his two sisters, martyrs to the truth and to liberty of conscience.'

Maria de Bohorques had not completed her twenty-first year when she fell into the clutches of the Inquisition, which never showed pity or mercy for any unrepentant Protestant, no matter how young or holy he or she might be. Maria was highly educated. Young as she was, she had already become perfectly acquainted with Latin, and understood Greek. The four Gospels she had committed to memory, and she had in her possession a considerable number of Lutheran books.

When brought before the Inquisitors she frankly confessed her faith to be Lutheran, and boldly told them that it was their duty to embrace it, instead of punishing people for professing it. The judges ordered her to the torture chamber, where she was racked unmercifully; yet no torture could induce her to name any persons whom she knew to be Protestants. She knew very well that if she named them, they also would soon be within the foul dungeons of the Inquisition; and so, with true Christian love, she preferred to suffer torture herself rather than that others should suffer. All that her tormentors could induce her to admit was that her sister Juana had not reproved her for the opinions she

held. For this poor Juana had to suffer most severely, as we shall see presently.

Two Jesuit priests and two Dominican monks were sent to persuade Maria to recant, but not all the subtle arguments of Jesuits or monks combined had the slightest influence on her. When they interviewed her for the last time, on the night before her death, she told them that they had come on a useless errand, and assured them that she felt more concern for her eternal salvation than they could possibly feel for her. She added that if she had any doubts as to the religion she professed she would have renounced it ; but now her faith in the doctrines of the Bible was stronger than ever, since she had found how little the priests could say on behalf of Popery.

At the place of execution Don Juan Ponce de Leon, who had abjured Lutheranism, tried to induce her to follow his evil example, and recant. But she refused to do so, and in indignant language told him that was no time to dispute ; but that it was right, instead of disputing, to employ themselves in meditating on the passion and death of their Redeemer, and reanimate the faith by which they were justified. Several monks and priests begged that her life might be spared, if she would only consent to repeat the Creed, which, of course, was not that of Pope Pius IV., which at that time had not been compiled, but either the Apostles'

or Nicene Creed ; we are not told which. Maria had no difficulty, therefore, in repeating the Creed, since it contained nothing inconsistent with the Protestant religion. But directly she had finished repeating it, she went on to interpret its articles according to the opinions of Martin Luther.

This was more than her persecutors could bear. They very soon stopped her comments, by ordering the executioner to do his work. She was strangled first, and then burnt.

Geddes tell us that Maria de Bohorques, ' when brought out of the Inquisition to be burnt, with an heavenly joy spread over her countenance, began to sing praises to God with a most melodious voice ; and having, when forbid, refused to give over singing, she was gagged, and continued so till she was brought to the stake,' when the gag was removed, that she might repeat the Creed as mentioned above.

The vengeance of the Inquisition soon overtook the sister of the martyred Maria. Donna Juana Bohorques was not a Lutheran ; there is nothing to show that she had any sympathy with Protestantism. But, because she had not denounced her own sister to the Inquisition to be murdered, when she knew of her Lutheran sympathies, poor Juana was arrested also. As it was ascertained that she was about to become a mother, they allowed her to remain in an upper room, in com-

parative comfort, until her child was born. Only eight days after that event her baby was taken from her, and a week later the mother, still in a weak condition of health, was cast down into one of the foul dungeons of the Inquisition. All kinds of false charges were brought against her; but because she would not acknowledge their truth she was taken to the torture chamber, where she endured the most fearful torments. She was fastened to the pulley. Cords were placed tightly round her wrists, and heavy iron weights to her feet. A rope was fastened to the cords round her hands, and this was passed through a revolving wheel in the ceiling of the dungeon. When all was ready an Inquisitor pulled the rope down, by which motion poor Juana was lifted from the ground and suspended in mid-air, her hands pulled violently back and the weights on her feet. In this position she was violently jerked up and down, until her arms and limbs were pulled out of their sockets.

Meanwhile, the cruel Inquisitors calmly asked her questions, under threats of still more fearful tortures, unless she answered them in the way desired. But she refused to deny the truth, even to relieve herself of her terrible agony. Failing in their efforts, the brutal priests made good their threats. Juana was taken from the pulley and placed on the rack. There the priests pressed

down heavy iron bars on her chest, until her ribs gave way. But all torture was in vain, and poor Juana was taken back to her dungeon. There she lingered for a week, suffering untold agony, and then God mercifully relieved her of her sufferings. Over her dead body the 'Holy Office pronounced a sentence, that the accusation of heresy had not been proved.'

Dr. Geddes states: 'There were a great many more women, and several of them of high quality, burnt at this time, both at Valladolid and Seville, for being Protestants; and who being all learned in the Scriptures, the Inquisitors, who are all utter strangers to those Divine Books, were not able to discourse with them about the truths revealed in those Oracles of God. This provoked Paramus, a furious Spanish Inquisitor, to declaim vehemently against women being suffered to read the Bible, and against the Protestant religion likewise.'

In the year 1555 a widow named Maria Gomez, residing at Seville, who had become a sincere Protestant, and a regular attendant at the private meetings of the Protestants, had the misfortune to lose her reason. While in that unhappy condition she manifested a violent dislike to her former friends, and even went to the Inquisitors and told them that the city was full of Lutheran

heretics. She gave up the names of more than three hundred of them; but as it was evident, even to the Inquisitors, that she was deranged, they fortunately took no action on the revelations she had made to them, but gave her up to her friends, with orders to keep her in strict confinement. Happily, she recovered her reason, and with the result that, on the next occasion we hear about her, she appears at the great auto-da-fé held at Seville on December 22, 1560, when no fewer than thirteen persons were burnt alive. Maria had three daughters, named respectively Elvira, Teresa, and Lucia, all of whom loved their Saviour, and had learnt to detest the false doctrines of Rome. On this occasion they were all present with their mother, not merely to see her die, but to die with her. With them also came, to gain the martyr's crown, a sister of Maria, named Leonor, the wife of a physician.

It was only by an act of the vilest infamy that these Christian women were brought within the clutches of the Inquisition. One of the daughters, who was the first to be arrested, was examined by the Inquisitors, but could not be induced to confess anything. Failing in this direction, the chief Inquisitor practised the blackest and foulest deception on the young lady.

He ordered her to be brought into the audience chamber, and then required everybody to leave

MARIA DE BOHORQUES ON HER WAY TO BURNING.

the room, excepting the prisoner and himself. As soon as they were alone the Inquisitor told her that he had conceived an intense affection for her, and that on this ground he had determined to save her life. Day after day he repeated his declarations of love to the poor girl, who at last was persuaded of his sincerity. Having thus gained a hold on her affections, the next step taken by this villain was to tell her that he knew that her mother and sisters had been denounced for heresy to the Inquisition, but that for the love he felt for her he had determined to save them also. But he could only do it on one condition—she must tell him in strict secrecy all about them and their real religious views. The poor girl was thus persuaded to tell him some things, but not enough for his purpose. He then showed himself in his true colours, and put her on the rack. Not satisfied with this, he placed her under the 'torture by water.' This torture is described by Limborch, who states that it is applied while the prisoner is on the rack.

'The torturer throws over his [or *her*, as in the case of this young lady] mouth and nostrils a thin cloth, so that he is scarce able to breathe through them; and in the meanwhile a small stream of water like a thread, not drop by drop, falls from on high upon the mouth of the person lying in this miserable condition, and so easily sinks down

the thin cloth to the bottom of his throat, so that there is no possibility of breathing, his mouth being stopped with water, and his nostrils with the cloth, so that the poor wretch is in the same agony as persons ready to die and breathing out their last. When this cloth is drawn out of his throat, as it often is, that he may answer to the questions, it is all wet with water and blood.'

Such was the torture which this poor young lady had to undergo. Is it to be wondered at that, under such circumstances, she told everything about those near and dear to her ?

That night her mother, sisters, and aunt were thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition. And now, only four days before the commemoration of that great birth which brought with it 'peace on earth, good will among men,' these godly women were brought forth to die. They had not been found guilty of any offence against the moral law ; the only fault found in them was their love for the Gospel of the grace of God, and their refusal to bow their necks to the cruel yoke of the tyrant Pope of Rome. As they stood there, on that winter morning, not one thought of repentance for their Protestantism entered their minds. On the contrary, as they waited together near the stake, one of the daughters came forward, and, kneeling before her mother with an overflowing heart, thanked her for all the religious instruction

she had given her. She then begged her mother's forgiveness for any offence she might have given her, and, in conclusion, asked for a mother's dying blessing. Raising her up, the old lady told her that she had never given her a moment's uneasiness, and then she reminded her, and those around her, of the strength which Jesus had promised them in the hour of trial, and of the Divine and everlasting joys which awaited them after their sufferings. It is stated that while this most touching scene was being enacted the members of the infamous Inquisition who were present never moved a muscle of their hardened countenances, or showed the slightest sympathy. And the dastard Inquisitor who betrayed them all to earthly ruin was there to enjoy the spectacle of their sufferings and death, the result of his treachery.

Three other women were burnt alive on this occasion, making eight in all. One of these was a nun named Francisca de Chaves. All we know about her case is that while in prison she showed great courage, and told the Inquisitors some plain truths about themselves, boldly declaring to their faces that they were nothing better than a 'generation of vipers.'

It was required by the laws which governed the Inquisition in the sixteenth century that every person should denounce to the Inquisition all those whom they knew to be heretics. No exception

whatever was made. Even the Sovereign was required to perform this supposed duty, the penalty for neglecting it being excommunication, with all its dread consequences. The nearest and dearest of relations had to be denounced in this way. Louis de Carvajal, Governor and Captain-General of the Province of Tampico, failed to denounce four of his nieces to the Inquisition, who were secretly Jews. For this offence, and this alone, he was forced to do penance publicly, deprived of all his offices, and reduced to beggary, from which he soon died of grief.

A still more terrible instance of the result of this law is recorded by Señor Don Adolpho de Castro, in his work entitled *The Spanish Protestants and their Persecution by Philip II.* A gentleman residing at Valladolid, in 1581, denounced his own two daughters to the Inquisition, as professors of the Protestant religion. Of course they were at once arrested, and thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition. After they had been there for some time, their father had sufficient influence with the Inquisitors to have them brought back to their own home again, for the purpose of inducing them to renounce their faith. The father himself tried first to move them, but finding his efforts vain, he brought in several priests and friars to argue with them. But their efforts were also utterly in vain. Then, in a fury, the father

sent them back to prison, became their bitter persecutor, and urged the Inquisitors to have them burnt alive. This was accordingly ordered to be done, whereupon their unnatural parent went out to the forests on his own estate, and with his own hands cut down the wood to burn his daughters! Then he brought the wood to the Inquisitors, who, instead of condemning him for his inhuman conduct, praised him for his greatness of mind as a model for all parents, and exhorted the people of Valladolid to follow his example under similar circumstances.

But even this was not sufficient to satisfy the father's zeal for '*Holy* Church.' This monstrous parent went again to the Inquisitors, to petition that he might himself be the executioner of his own children! The Inquisitors, equally inhuman, were delighted at the request, and by cymbals and trumpets proclaimed aloud to the inhabitants of Valladolid the praises of the would-be murderer, and their permission for him to commit the foul deed. The poor girls, faithful to the last to the Lord and Master they loved, were burnt to ashes, the fire being lit by their own father! There is nothing to show that the man was mad; and even if he had been, there was certainly nothing of madness in the cold-blooded sanction given by the priests of the Inquisition to such a foul and unnatural crime.

CHAPTER X

WOMEN MARTYRS OF BELGIUM, GERMANY, BOHEMIA, AND SCOTLAND

Antoinette Haveloos—Marion—Clara—Martha Von Porzicz—Helen Stirk.

IN nearly every Continental country women martyrs of the Reformation have given up their lives for Christ's sake. Of those who suffered in Belgium an honoured place should be given to Antoinette Haveloos, whose maiden name was Van Roesmals. She resided just outside of the town of Louvain, and was connected with many of the best families of the place. How she was led to embrace Protestantism we are not told, but that she did so with all her heart there can be no doubt. One who knew her testifies : 'Above all things she was given to reading and meditating on the Holy Scriptures ; and by this means she became acquainted with the will of God, which she also put in practice, discharging towards her neighbours the offices of charity.' When about fifty years of age Antoinette, in the year 1539, lost her husband and two dear children during a

pestilence which prevailed in the town; and to add to her troubles, she was soon after deprived of the greater portion of her property. She had consequently to take a smaller house, for herself and her only remaining child to live in; and there it was her great delight to devote one of its rooms for the use of God's dear children, who assembled there, a few at a time, to read and study God's Holy Word, to pray for themselves that they might be strengthened in their holy faith, and that those who were still in darkness might be brought into the light of the Gospel.

But those were dangerous times, when men and women could only go to such meetings at great risk, and in dread of being denounced by the spies of the priests, ever on the watch to prevent the spread of Protestantism. She was very heartily supported by her much-loved daughter, Guilda, a young lady of great beauty, refined, well educated, and then in the flower of her age. She was passionately devoted to her mother, with whose religious opinions she was in full sympathy. It was a great comfort to Antoinette that not only her only child, but also most of her nieces and nephews had also become believers in the Gospel. A most interesting account of the Bible readings in Antoinette's house is given in the *Life of John A. Lasco*, by Dr. H. Dalton.

'Her house,' writes Dr. Dalton, 'became the

centre of a group of companions in the faith, who often found themselves in a wondrous way gathered together, as though God Himself had brought them there. Only quite in secret, in a stolen manner, did they assemble in the back room of the widow, with closed doors, as the Apostles at the Paschal time for fear of the Jews. . . . There are always but few who meet at the house on the Bolleborre, in order to escape all attention, for the Quintin's Church stands not far from the house, and who knows but the suspicious priests have their doubts, or even have their informers in the neighbourhood? To-day there have assembled in the house of the widow the rarely absent Josse van Ousberghen, a furrier by trade, deeply grounded in the Gospel, full of peace of soul, of a quiet nature, but immovably steadfast and robust in his faith. With him enters one of the sculptors, Jan Beyarts, with his already aged wife, Catherine Metsys; the member of their household, too, Jan Schats, is not absent this evening. If we were to enter again at another time, we should meet with new faces. When, at the expiration of about three years, the enemies stretched forth their blood-seeking hands against this little flock of believers, they apprehended a band of forty-three companions in the faith.'

But few of these escaped the death penalty, after having been most cruelly tortured by the

Inquisitors. A considerable number of women were amongst the victims arrested, and their sufferings under torture were terrible. 'The torturers,' says d'Aubigné, 'knew no pity for age, or sex, or infirmity. The poor women were tormented as well as the men. The piteous cries of these cruelly tortured wretched ones were heard in the streets of Louvain. Their voices, raised by grief to a higher pitch, were borne to a distance. Inarticulate sounds, piercing words, repeated exclamations, lamentations, weeping, mournful noises, broken sobs, and dying voices spread terror everywhere. Throughout the town there was nothing but sighs, tears, and lamentations from the people of every class, whose hearts were filled with grief.' And yet there was one class from whose hearts all pity was banished; for the priesthood, and especially the Inquisitors, had hearts of ice towards the sufferings endured by these faithful servants of Jesus. Indeed, they even went so far as to rejoice, hoping that these cruel torments would prevent others from leaving the Church of Rome.

In May, 1543, the executions of these Bible-reading Christians commenced. The men were executed first, and afterwards the women. How many of the women were thus inhumanly murdered we are not told; but amongst them, faithful and steadfast Antoinette Nan Roesmals was

prominent. She had been the centre round which all the Protestantism of Louvain had concentrated itself for three years, and it was not likely that she would be allowed to escape the cruel clutches of her persecutors. An elderly woman, whose name is not recorded, suffered with her; and the punishment for both was to be buried alive. Antoinette was much beloved in Louvain for her good works, and therefore large sums of money were offered that she might be set at liberty. But although the Inquisitors loved money dearly, they loved Protestant blood more, and so the noble Antoinette had to die.

A more than usually pathetic scene was witnessed on this occasion, enough to move the most hardened heart to tears. Her loving and devoted daughter Gudula, who was still at liberty, insisted on being present at her mother's death. I cannot do better than describe the sad scene in the words of d'Aubigné:

'Antoinette drew near to the spot where she was to be laid alive in the ground. Gudula, her beautiful daughter, in the flower of her age, who cherished the deepest affection for her mother, would not be separated from her.

'"I will," she said, "be a spectator of the sacrifice of my mother."

'It was, however, agreed that she should not stand by the brink of the grave in which she who

brought her into the world was to be buried alive, and she consented to remain at a distance, *if only she could see her mother*. Thus concealed in a place apart, she saw the pious Antoinette led to execution ; she saw the grave prepared, and that *er mother still remained calm*. Gudula was overwhelmed, silent and motionless. *She shed no tears ; her whole life was in her gaze*. With fixed eyes she watched the progress of the dismal execution. But when she saw her mother going down alive to the place of the dead, when the servants of the executioners threw upon her some shovels of earth, and she began to be covered by it, Gudula uttered a cry. From this moment she could not refrain ; her outcries were terrible.

'"O God!" says an eye-witness, "with what lamentations, with what wailings she filled the air!"

'Her tongue was at length loosed, she was no longer motionless. Reduced to despair, she began to run about the streets of the town as if she had lost her reason. Tears ran down from her eyes as from a fountain. She plucked out her hair, she tore her face. "The poor girl is still living," says the witness who has left us the narrative of these events, "and I have good hope that she will never be forsaken of the everlasting God, the Father of our Deliverer, Jesus Christ, who is also the Father of the orphan."'

In Germany many faithful Protestant women have suffered death for Christ's sake; but very little is known about them. One of these was Marion, the wife of a barber named Augustine. Both husband and wife were martyrs for the truth in the year 1549. They were on their way to England, where, at the time, the Protestant religion was sanctioned by authority, when they were arrested. Somehow or other Augustine managed to escape for a time, but his wife was less fortunate. With her there was arrested one Nicholas Frenchman, and his wife Barbara.

All three were taken to the prison at Dormick, bound hands and feet. The Duke of Aerschot, with a company of priests and friars, visited them while in confinement, trying to move them from the faith of the Gospel, but without any success. They were, however, successful, by terrorising poor Barbara on the one hand, and making promises of favour and delivery to her on the other, into giving them valuable information, which led to the arrest of a large number of Protestants. For this service she at least escaped the death penalty, but what became of her afterwards is unknown.

Her husband, however, did not escape. He was sentenced to be burnt to ashes. On hearing the sentence Nicholas blessed the Lord, who had counted him worthy to be a witness in the cause

of His dear and well-beloved Son. When on the way to the place of execution he was ordered on no account to attempt to address the people, for, if he did, they threatened to have a ball of wood thrust into his mouth, to prevent him speaking. But for all that, when he was at the stake, and seeing a great multitude of people around him, he could not help exclaiming, as though he were personally addressing the Emperor Charles V., 'O Charles! Charles! how long shall thy heart be hardened!' To the friars around him, who told him that he had a devil, Nicholas replied with a verse of the Psalm: 'Depart from me, all ye wicked! for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.'

It was not until after the death of Nicholas Frenchman that Marion was put upon her trial. She had once been in Geneva, and therefore her judges asked her how the sacraments were administered there? They even wanted to know if she herself acted as minister, by celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. She told them that she was no celebrator, but that she certainly was a partaker. She was sentenced to be buried alive, and the sentence was carried out. When Marion was brought to the open grave in which she was to be buried, she knelt down and earnestly besought the Lord to help and strengthen her. She then asked that her

face should be covered with a linen cloth. This request was granted, after which the grave was filled up, the hangman jumped upon it, and trampled it down with his feet.

Not long afterwards the husband was again arrested, and burnt alive.

Bohemia, the land of John Huss, gave a hearty welcome to the Reformation. The land had been prepared for the doctrine taught by Martin Luther through the labours of its great hero, who had been cruelly put to death by order of the Council of Constance, notwithstanding the safe-conduct which had been accorded to him. Followers of Huss had continued in Bohemia for more than two hundred years after his death, and these welcomed with extraordinary enthusiasm the doctrines of the Reformation. Protestantism spread rapidly throughout the land, notwithstanding all the efforts of the enemies of the Gospel, and at one time it seemed as though Romanism would have been swept out of the country.

Early in the history of Bohemian Protestantism persecution commenced. Even before the arrival of the Jesuits, many martyrs had testified their love for Jesus at the stake. One of the earliest of these was a widow, aged sixty, known to history only by her Christian name of Clara. She was

housekeeper to an aged and learned man named Nicolas Wrzetenarz, who was accused of holding heretical doctrines. Clara, who had been instructed by her master, was arrested at the same time. Like him, she refused to believe in transubstantiation or the sacrifice of the mass, or the intercession of saints. They were sentenced to be burnt alive together. When they wished to pray together before their death, they were told they might do so, provided they turned towards the east, and prayed before a crucifix. Of course they refused to do anything of the kind. Instead of this they turned their backs to both the east and the crucifix, and prayed with their faces towards the west.

'The law of God,' they declared, 'forbids any image to be worshipped, either in heaven or upon earth. We will only worship the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who is alike in the south, west, north, and east.'

When the old man stood by the stake he turned his earnest gaze heavenwards, and said:

'Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, born of a pure virgin, who hast vouchsafed to die upon the cross, even for me a vile sinner, Thee alone I adore, to Thee I commend my soul! Have mercy upon me, and pardon my sins.'

While he was speaking, the widow Clara, faithful also to the last, was placed by his side. After

they had both been fastened, the Protestant books found in their house were thrown at them, and then martyrs and books were consumed together in the fire. They did not die in vain. Their glorious deaths were object-lessons to the Bohemians which were never forgotten. They died in Prague on December 19, 1520.

In the year following, another Bohemian woman gave up her life as a Protestant martyr. She is known as Martha von Porzicz, and seems to have been a woman of more than ordinary courage. I have been unable to discover anything about her early life. While she was in prison she was frequently examined by the town magistrates and others, who, however, failed to see in her any signs of fear, or desire to compromise her faith in hope of saving her life. She even went so far as to censure severely those followers of John Huss who were inclined to say pleasant things about the Pope. In her opinion they had acted most foolishly. When told to get ready for her 'robe of fire,' her simple and prompt reply was: 'My cloak and my veil are ready, let me be led to the fire as soon as you please.' Some one told her that she had reviled the sacraments, but this she indignantly denied: 'Oh, no!' she exclaimed, 'I am not condemned for reviling the sacraments, but I am condemned because I am unwilling to

confess, according to the will of the priests, that Christ is present in the sacrament in His bones, hair, sinews, and nerves.'

When about to die, brave Martha called out to the people around her : ' Oh ! do not believe these priests ! They are lying hypocrites, servants of the belly, inordinate, and adulterers.' She was taken to pray before the cross, but though she, in the scriptural sense, loved the cross of Christ, she refused to use a material cross in her devotions. She even turned her back to it, and then, pointing upwards to the skies, she exclaimed : ' Thither, where our God is, must I look.' She endured the pain of burning with wonderful bravery, for love of Him Who long before had suffered for her.

The Reformation early found an entrance into Scotland, and before Martin Luther died it had added many names to the illustrious roll of the martyrs of Jesus. Patrick Hamilton was put to death as early as 1527, only ten years after Luther had nailed his celebrated Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. But it was not until 1544 that the first female Protestant martyr laid down her life for Jesus in Scotland. Even at that early date Protestantism had made considerable progress in Perth. An Act of Parliament had been passed giving permission to everybody in Scotland to read the Bible in their own language,

and gladly and largely the privilege was used. But the people were only allowed to read it in private.

Cardinal Beaton had ever been a bitter enemy of the Gospel, and having heard that it was making great progress, he hastened to the city of Perth early in January, 1543, accompanied by several judges, bishops, and noblemen, determined, if possible, to crush out Protestantism by fire and sword.

They had not been long in the city before six faithful servants of Christ were arrested, and cast into prison, on a charge of heresy, viz.: Robert Lamb, William Anderson, James Hunter, James Finlayson, James Ranoldson, and his wife, generally known as Helen Stirk. They were charged with assembling together to hear expositions of Holy Scripture, with dishonouring images, eating flesh on fast days, and for blaspheming the Virgin Mary.

Robert Lamb was then further charged with interrupting one Friar Spence, while preaching in a Perth church, and then charging the friar with preaching false doctrine, and for afterwards affirming that no one who understood and knew the truth should hear it attacked without contradicting the speaker. To us, in this twentieth century, it seems strange indeed to read that one of the charges brought against Robert Lamb,

William Anderson, and James Ranoldson was that they had eaten a goose on a forbidden day.

All the prisoners were found guilty and sentenced to death, the men by hanging and the faithful Helen by drowning. She begged hard to be allowed to die with her husband, but they would not allow it. Yet she was permitted to accompany him to the place of execution, and on the way she exhorted him to patience and perseverance for Christ's sake. No thought of turning back ever entered the hearts of this brave couple. At last they had to part, and then, kissing her husband, she said to him :

' Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days. But this day, in which we must die, ought to be the most joyful to us both, because we must have joy for ever. Therefore, I will not bid you " Good-night," for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the kingdom of heaven.'

It was now Helen's turn to die. She had brought with her her infant baby sucking at her breast, so that, with a true mother's love, she might have her darling with her to the last moment of her life. She begged the townspeople who gathered round her, for God's sake, to look after the dear children she was leaving behind, and then, giving her baby to a woman standing by, she submitted herself to the executioner, who at once drowned her.

The story of the Women Martyrs of the Reformation contains many useful lessons for those who live in the twentieth century. No Christian can read the narrative of their sufferings without realising how deep was their personal love for the Saviour of sinners. With them it was the passion of their lives. For His sake they were willing to suffer the loss of all things. They loved Him because He had first loved them, while still in an unregenerate state, and had suffered and died in their stead, the just for the unjust. They loved Him for what He had done for them in the past, for what He was to them in the hour of their bitterest trials, and for all they expected from Him in the life everlasting. How little all that we now do for the Master seems, when compared with the heroic self-sacrifices of these martyrs of the centuries gone by! We are not likely in nominally Christian lands to have to go to the stake for our principles, as these Christian women did, though a similar fate may yet await some in heathen lands. But we may be called to make many sacrifices for the truth of God, and to suffer reproach and shame for Christ's sake. Adherence to Protestantism may occasionally lead to the frowns of those we love, especially when we refuse to go with the throng in praising up that Church of Rome which shed our sisters' blood. And we may learn from these

martyrs to speak out loudly and persistently against the unscriptural system which they protested against with their blood.

It is very evident that these women martyrs would never have willingly faced death were they not personally assured of their own eternal salvation, and that He who had loved them would love them unto the end. We cannot doubt that one of Satan's most dangerous weapons against the Protestants, when put on their trial for their lives, was the suggested thought that after all, even if they died as Protestants, they were not quite sure of their eternal salvation. Men and women who would face a cruel death gladly, with the assurance of a heaven of joy for them hereafter, shrank back from martyrdom when Satan suggested to them doubts of their spiritual condition in the sight of God. It was, probably, this uncertainty which was the secret cause of so many Protestants giving up their faith, and falling back to Romanism, when torture and a fiery death awaited them.

The Protestant martyrs were men and women who believed in doctrine. They had a definite faith, and were convinced that it did very much indeed matter what they believed, and what they disbelieved. There was no latitudinarian spirit within them. They believed that the Bible was God's infallible revelation to man, and

they wisely refused to believe any doctrine as necessary to salvation, or as a part of the Christian religion, which was not taught by the written Word of God. The theory that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the only Rule of Faith, was then, as now, the only safeguard against religious error.

The attitude of the women martyrs towards the sacrifice of the mass is worthy of special notice. The theory that by virtue of the consecration of the sacramental elements, the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ was present, whole and entire, in each separate crumb of bread, and in each separate drop of wine, and that when these elements were offered up by the priest in sacrifice they were as efficacious as the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary, was one from which they turned with horror. With them the sacrifice of the mass was a wicked and evil thing, with which they could have no peace while life lasted. Their view of these masses agreed with that of Article XXXI. of the Church of England —they were 'blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.' The honour of their Saviour demanded that Christian women should maintain the completeness and sufficiency of the one Sacrifice offered once for all on the Cross of Calvary, and therefore to it alone they entrusted their eternal salvation, and rejected with horror its great counterfeit, the sacrifices of masses. Almost

every one of the noble-minded women whose sufferings are recorded in these pages might have saved her life by simply promising to go to her parish church while mass was being said. The promises made by Bishop Bonner prove this very clearly, with reference to the English martyrs. But they felt that to sanction with their bodily presence a service contrary to the truth they believed in their hearts, would be an act of hypocrisy for which no valid excuse could be pleaded. They would rather be burnt alive than go to mass. If they had lived in this twentieth century there can be no doubt that they would have treated the Ritualistic sacrifice of the mass in the same way as the Roman mass, since both are, in all essentials, identical.

We live in an age when much is heard about Christian *unity*. The Protestant martyrs lived in an age when much was heard of Christian *separation* from evil. There are many who now forget that separation is as much a duty as unity. 'Come out from among them, and be ye *separate*' (2 Cor. vi. 17). These Protestant women martyrs fled from the Church of Rome as from a great spiritual plague; to be united to her was a great sin of unfaithfulness to God. Let us take these faithful ones as our own examples, and resist all modern efforts to promote corporate or individual reunion with the Church of Rome. Let us

imitate our martyred sisters, whose cry was to all who heard them : 'Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities' (Rev. xviii. 4, 5).

It cannot be said that the women martyrs of the Reformation died in vain. Their sufferings, combined with those of their martyred brethren, freed many nations from the intolerable yoke of Papal bondage. The liberty Protestant nations enjoy to-day is, under God, mainly owing to such exertions and sorrows. Deliverance from Papal bondage, and freedom for the Gospel of the Grace of God, were things worth dying for. Without their deaths the Reformation might possibly have proved a failure. The Protestant nations are, at the present moment, at the head of the world, and those who benefit by their temporal prosperity should be forward in acknowledging their indebtedness to those who were cruelly slain by Rome. Had the Papacy by brute force succeeded in suppressing the Reformation, the present state of the civilised world would be vastly different from what it has become. It is earnestly hoped that, by God's blessing, the noble influence of the Women Martyrs of the Reformation may be extended by the perusal of this volume.

If the Church of Rome had repented of her crimes in shedding the blood of these innocent Christian women, there would, perhaps, have been but little need for this book. But she has not repented; not one word of sorrow for shedding Protestant blood has ever been uttered by her officially. She is to-day what she was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A Church which still honours the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew, by keeping up in the Vatican Palace the pictures by Vasari in praise of that event, cannot be said to have repented. She still believes in the persecution of those she terms 'heretics,' and is as bitter an enemy to-day of religious liberty as in the days when the Inquisition was in full work, and the Valleys of Piedmont re-echoed the cries of the victims of her brutal soldiers. In short, she is still 'the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus' (Rev. xvii. 6).

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